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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCE

In Chinese (9CN0) Paper 3C/3M: Speaking

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## Paper overview

The GCE Chinese 9CN03 was set as per the GCE 2017 Specification and is consistent with the format of the previous 9CN03 paper. As a speaking assessment, this paper rewards students who can demonstrate:

- knowledge and understanding of the cultural context by giving ideas, examples and information on one of the published sub-themes and on a chosen subject of interest which students have researched and linked to the social and cultural context of the Chinese-speaking world;
- ability to analyse aspects of the cultural context by presenting and justifying valid-arguments, viewpoints, and conclusions;
- ability to interact and to hold a natural and fluent discourse;
- skill in manipulating language accurately; and
- ability to respond to written texts in speech.

The paper consists of two tasks, which are carried out in consecutive order in one session. The assessment score is out of 72 marks with a total assessment time of 21 to 23 minutes. (16 to 18 minutes of speaking time, plus 5 minutes' preparation time for Task 1). In order to allow sufficient time for the students to access the full range of assessment criteria for both tasks, the recommended time for Task 1 is 6 to 7 minutes, and 10 to 11 minutes for Task 2.

The total assessment mark of Task 1 is 30, based on one of the published themes and sub-themes.

- Theme 1: The Changes of Modern Chinese Society – Family, Education and Work
- Theme 2: Chinese Culture – Traditions and Cultural Activities
- Theme 3: The Development of Chinese Society - Communication and Technology, Economy and Environment
- Theme 4: The Impact of Reform since 1978 – Reform and China & UK Relationship

Students have a choice between two sub-themes assigned by the assessment grid. There are two prompts on the stimulus cards which are given as a springboard to the discussion. All the cards are printed in both traditional/full characters and simplified characters, and students can speak in Cantonese or Mandarin according to the language they enter for the examination.

The total assessment mark for Task 2 is 42, based on a subject of interest that students have chosen for their independent research project (IRP). They are free to choose any subject related to the cultural and social context of the Chinese-speaking world.

As this is the fourth series of this Specification, most of the teachers and students are well attuned to the requirements of the paper. This paper is marked according to principles outlined in the [Specification - A level Chinese \(pearson.com\)](https://www.pearson.com/9780130900000/specification) and there were some very good performances. The following section will discuss the students' performances in further detail.

## **Students' Performances**

### **Task 1 - Discussion on a theme**

#### **Part 1 Responses to a stimulus card**

This task was completed successfully by most students. They demonstrated their appreciation of different aspects of the culture and society of the Chinese-speaking world and developed these aspects with relevant information and examples. Students who observed the key words in the prompts, such as 越来越 in CN3 and CN4, 日常生活 in CN5, 其他 in CN7 and 新 in CN8, often expressed their opinions more thoroughly and achieved higher marks. On the contrary, students who only responded briefly to the prescribed questions on the stimulus card and relied on their teacher-examiners to ask many follow-up questions often showed limited knowledge and understanding on the topic. Some of those conversations became an interview rather than a discussion.

Unfortunately, some students gave overly long responses to the prescribed questions and their teacher-examiner ended this task and moved onto Task 2 without initiating further discussion on the topic or the overall theme. As students did not have the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the cultural and social context of Chinese speaking communities or weren't able to analyse and develop arguments on the overall theme, they did not have access to the full range of marks.

#### **Part 2 Discussion on the overall theme**

Many teacher-examiners structured the two parts of Task 1 carefully and were able to broaden the discussion to cover other aspects of the overall theme by asking their students to express their analysis and arguments on specific issues of the sub-theme. When the teacher-examiners followed up with suitable questions at an appropriate level, they maximised their students' ability to achieve high marks. However, questions requiring straightforward answers or answers that mainly relied on description, such as stories and celebratory activities of festivals, introduction of a piece of music or song, personal experiences of school life, learning of a musical instrument or Chinese language, habitual use of mobile phones and internet or of school exchange experiences, did not provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their full potential.

A small number of students did some mini presentations with pre-learnt scripts on the prescribed topics instead of having a meaningful discussion with the teacher-examiner. Others had general conversations, but lost focus on the cultural and social context of Chinese-speaking communities. Neither of these served the original intent of this part of the assessment and they did not help the students score well.

### **Task 2 – Independent Research Project**

#### **Part 1 Independent Research Presentation**

It is evident that an increasing number of students are aware of the assessment criteria and can introduce their research statement, summarise two named written sources and give a personal response to what they have read within the time limit. However, there are still a significant number of students who overlooked the original intent of Part 1 which is to assess their ability in understanding and to respond in speech to Chinese written texts. When they presented the overall results of their

research without naming any sources or responding to authors' ideas, or argued their opinion on the issues, there was very limited assessable material and they did not score well in this section.

Again, some IRPs lost focus on the social and cultural context of Chinese-speaking society and students presented their research as a general issue with no specific references to Chinese communities. Those IRPs failed to meet the full criteria of the assessment.

## **Part 2 Discussion on Independent Research**

This task was most successful when teacher-examiners structured the discussion to provide students opportunity to critically analyse different aspects of the research and evaluate them with relevant source materials to justify their arguments. However, a significant proportion of discussions were based on some simple straightforward questions, such as, an explanation of some concepts or terminologies, an elaboration of some research findings, personal experiences and feelings in relation to the research. These conversations usually did not allow students to demonstrate their analytical abilities or justify any perceptive ideas and yielded no benefit for this part of the assessment.

There were several interesting research projects on communication, technology, environmental issues and an aging population in this examination series. While students appropriately used some Chinese written source materials for Part 1, many of them discussed their research as a global issue and deviated from the Chinese social and cultural context. Again, this limited their access to the full range of marks for this task.

## **Quality of language**

Many of the students demonstrated a very good command of the language and were able to produce coherent speech and demonstrated accurate usages of vocabulary and grammatical structures. However, there were students who spoke fluently with correct pronunciation and intonation, but simplicity of lexis and syntax did not necessarily result in articulate communications. Others who spoke with limited lexical items and expressions often hindered clarity of communication and as a result, prevented meaning from being conveyed.

It is also evident that some students struggled to understand the teacher-examiners' questions due to their pronunciation and/or choices of vocabulary. Teacher-examiners are advised to use simple Chinese and avoid adding unnecessary difficulty for their students. For speakers of Cantonese, verbal forms of everyday Cantonese should be employed as people express themselves in their real-life conversation.

## **Interaction**

Students' ability to interact with the teacher-examiner is assessed in both tasks. Almost all the students were able to demonstrate their ability to give spontaneous and relevant responses to what they have heard and sustained their conversation, though some hesitation was shown at times. It was encouraging to see that most students were able to interact with their teacher-examiner by checking their understanding or eliciting their opinions. However, interactions are expected to be done naturally and appropriately throughout the conversation. Taking the lead to develop natural conversation remains to be a challenge to many students.

## **General administration**

### **Forms and scripts**

Most exam centres conducted the assessments correctly and uploaded the scripts with relevant documents in a timely fashion. However, some failed to upload them within two working days of the assessment taking place or had some forms missing, which inevitably caused some delay to the marking progress. Centres are advised to refer to the [A Level Administrative Support Guide - Conducting Speaking Assessment \(pearson.com\)](#) and [Conducting the A Level Speaking Exam FAQs 2024 \(pearson.com\)](#) for further information.

Teacher-examiners and students need to check and ensure the RP3 form is completed correctly according to the instructions given. They must include full details of the sources in Chinese and six to ten findings of their research in English. Writing any additional notes, scripts for presentation, questions or answers for discussions on the form is forbidden.

### **Recordings**

Teacher-examiners are reminded that there is a very limited assessment time for students to demonstrate their abilities. When interacting with students, it would be best to respond concisely.

It would be most helpful to place the microphone close to the student and ensure their voice is loud and clear. Every effort should be made to minimise interference and avoid moving any objects or rustling papers near the microphone during recording. Checking the quality of the recordings and ensuring that they are not corrupted before dismissing students is vital too.

## Paper Summary

Based on their performances in this paper, students are offered the following advice:

- Read the stimulus card carefully, paying attention to the key words in the statements and questions and prepare their responses accordingly.
- While utilising the recommended time for each task, ensure Task 2 Presentation is kept within the recommended two minutes.
- Ensure their IRP has a clear focus on Chinese culture and society.
- State their research question/statement on the RP3 form in Chinese and record six to ten key findings of their research in English, which they are prepared to give information about and to analyse their findings; ensure a sufficient range of details to meet the assessment objective.
- Include a summary of at least two named written sources in Chinese used as part of their research, outline the authors' main points/ideas and give a personal response to each of them in their presentation.
- Respond to questions; support their viewpoints, ideas and arguments with relevant information, examples and/or references, and ensure all materials are clearly linked to the Chinese culture.
- Interact with teacher-examiners spontaneously, check understanding and elicit opinions naturally and at appropriate points. Initiate communication by taking the lead to develop the conversation.
- Ensure the lexis and syntax are correct, and pronunciation and intonation are intelligible and accurate. Show variation in the use of grammatical structures and vocabulary.

Further information and advice can be found in [Specification - A level Chinese \(pearson.com\)](https://www.pearson.com/qualifications/pearson-edu-china/alevel-chinese)