



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Chinese (9CN0)
Paper 3: 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 eight published sub-themes.

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

There are two parts to the discussion of Task 1. Part 1 begins with the two compulsory questions on the stimulus card. The teacher-examiner then continues to help students to develop their discussion by asking appropriate follow-up questions relating to the statement on the card. In Part 2, the teacher-examiner broadens the discussion to cover other aspects of the overall theme, i.e. discussion on the cross sub-theme.

The total assessment mark of Task 2 is 42, based on a subject of interest that students have chosen for their 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 fifth series of this Specification, most of the teachers and students are, with the reference to the Examiner's Reports and examination papers, 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/9cn03) and there is an increasing number of very

good performances. The following section will discuss the students' performances in further details.

Students' Performances

Task 1 - Discussion on a theme

Part 1 Responses to a stimulus card

This task was completed successfully by majority of students. They demonstrated their appreciation of different aspects of the culture and society of the Chinese-speaking world, elaborated their responses and formed justified conclusions with relevant information and examples. Those who had limited knowledge and understanding on the topic and gave brief responses often did not meet the recommended six-minute assessment time, or relied on prompting and many follow-up questions from their teacher-examiner to reach the recommended time.

A small number of centres were not familiar with the procedures. Some teacher-examiners asked both prescribed questions in one go and others only announced Task 1 and leave the students doing monologues in this part which are not the original intent.

CN1 asked students to discuss how megacities make people's lives better and the problems of megacities. Most students responded to this card were able to discuss several advantages of megacities, though some of them were not directly related to people's lives. However, they expanded their discussion on the problems that megacities brought about at ease.

CN2 asked students whether Chinese people learning English can promote Sino-British cultural exchange and other ways that can enhance that. Students responded to this card often had a good discussion on the benefits of learning English but not always relate it to cultural exchanges or relationships between the two countries. Some students struggled to broaden their discussion on other ways which can enhance cultural exchanges and continued their discussions on the learning languages.

CN3 required students to discuss whether Chinese young people should do housework, and the changes of family structure have taken place in China. Most students agreed to the statement and discussed its benefits, and a small number of students related this to the Chinese culture i.e. filial piety. Students who evaluated the pros and cons, often gave a relatively thorough discussion. Responses to the second question demonstrated very good knowledge on the changes of family structure in China, except some discussed the roles and responsibilities within Chinese families rather than their structure.

CN4 It asked whether Chinese parents should spend money to give their children a better education and ways which young people prepare for their future employment. Majority of the students agreed with that as they regarded better education means better academic results, and that will lead to a better prospect in their future careers. However, there were limited ideas on what to do to prepare for work.

CN5 required students to comment on whether it is good to limit the Chinese young people's internet time and for what Chinese people use the Internet. Students' responses to the first question were well argued with developed ideas. However, some students did not broaden their discussion to all age of Chinese people but remained their discussion on young people's internet use.

CN6 asked students whether people in China should use electric cars to reduce air pollution in China and things Chinese people can do to protect the environment. Most students demonstrated very good knowledge on the environmental issues and responded very well to the first question. However, responses to the second question were rather limited and reducing uses of plastics were often mentioned.

CN7 asked students to explain why more and more Chinese people choose to travel during the Spring Festival and other traditions which are very important to the Chinese people. Students' responses on this card were very diverse. In response to the second question, majority of them continued to name some activities over traditional festivals of which, more often than not, were descriptive/narrative. Only a small number of students took the initiative to elaborate or discussed other traditions. They often needed the teacher-examiner prompted and helped to move the discussion forward.

CN8 asked students to explain why people all over the world like to watch Chinese movies and other Chinese cultural activities which are popular. Students were able to give some valid reasons on their discussions. With regard to other popular Chinese cultural activities, many responded with traditional celebrative activities, which of course included some cultural activities.

Part 2 Discussion on the overall theme

The majority of the 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. Some of them supported their students by announcing the relevant sub-theme and/or topic clearly prior to asking the questions. When the teacher-examiners followed up with suitable questions at the appropriate level, they maximised their student's opportunity to gain their highest possible marks. However, discussions required straightforward description or personal experiences, such as housework they have done, attending tuition classes or school exchange programmes, the way they celebrate a festival, an introduction to a Chinese novel or movie, their actions for environmental protection or the likes, do not allow students to demonstrate their ability to analyse aspects of the cultural context unless the student takes initiative to develop their responses to provide some analysis, justify their arguments and draw valid conclusions.

Still, there are examinations which fully focused on the chosen sub-theme and missed Part 2 completely. As a result, students were not able to access the full range of marks of this task.

Task 2 – Independent Research Project

Part 1 Independent Research Presentation

An increasing number of students provided a well-structured presentation. They began with their research statement, summarised two named written sources used and gave a personal response to each of the sources they have read within the two-minute limit. However, a significant number of students overlooked the original intent of this part which is to assess student's ability in understanding and responding in speech to Chinese written texts and they presented the overall results of their research without naming any specific source or responded to any authors' ideas; others only detailed the summaries of their sources with no personal responses to any of the reference materials. Their scores are inevitably impacted by the limited assessable materials.

Part 2 Discussion on Independent Research

Having appropriately used some Chinese written source materials for Part 1, this task was most successful where teacher-examiners structured the discussion to provide students opportunity to critically analyse different aspects of the research and evaluate their research findings with relevant source materials to justify their arguments. However, many discussed their research in general with little reference to their research materials, and/or related them to the Chinese-speaking community.

Again, discussions based on simple, straightforward questions, such as, explanations of certain concepts or terms, and further information on certain research findings, did not allow students to demonstrate their analytical abilities or justify any perceptive ideas, and hence did not contribute much to the score for this part of the assessment.

Quality of language

Students are to be commended for their language skills, as the majority of the students demonstrated very good command of the language and were able to produce coherent speech and to demonstrate accurate usages of vocabulary and grammatical structures. However, there were students who were able to speak fluently with correct pronunciation and intonation, using very simple lexis and syntax which did not necessarily result in articulate communication.

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 challenge for their students. Apart from the two prescribed questions, there is no need for teacher-examiners to stick to their original questions and they are free to rephrase their questions to support students. As for speakers of Cantonese, the verbal form of everyday Cantonese should be employed as people express themselves in their real-life conversation and avoid reading out the questions or responses in their written form.

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 showed hesitation at times. It was encouraging to see that an increasing number of students able to take the lead to develop their conversation and interact with their teacher-examiner by checking their understanding or elicited their opinions. However, interactions are expected to be done naturally and appropriately at different points in the conversation rather than contrived or even routinely.

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 centres failed to upload both the RP3 forms and CS4 forms, which inevitably caused some delay to the marking progress.

Teacher-examiners and students need to check and ensure the RP3 form is completed correctly according to the instructions given. They must include their research title in Chinese, six to ten findings of their research in English and full details of the sources.

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 ruffling papers near the microphone during recording. Checking the quality of the recordings and ensuring that they are not corrupted before dismissing students are 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 two minutes.
- Ensure their IRP and discussions have 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.
- When respond to questions, always support their viewpoints, ideas and arguments with relevant information, examples and/or references, and ensure all materials are clearly linked to the Chinese cultural and social context.
- Interact with teacher-examiner spontaneously, ask them questions to check understanding and/or elicit opinions 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)

