2024 VCE Chinese First Language oral external assessment report

Refer to the [VCE Chinese First Language study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/chinese-firstlanguage/Pages/Index.aspx) and [examination criteria and specifications](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/Chinese-First-Language.aspx) for full details on this study and how it is assessed.

Section 1: Presentation

What students did well

In the 2024 examination, students:

* maximised their use of the allotted presentation time. Most presentations adhered to the time constraints, with students demonstrating a clear and organised structure that allowed for the efficient delivery of their key points. This approach ensured that essential content was covered within the designated timeframe, allowing for a comprehensive overview of the subtopic while maintaining audience engagement. Furthermore, the ability to manage time effectively reflected the students’ preparedness and understanding of the exam.
* presented a very clear stance on an issue related to the chosen subtopic. Most students presented a very clear and well-argued stance on the issues related to their chosen subtopic, demonstrating strong critical thinking and a deep understanding of the subject at hand. They not only identified the core issues but also supported their positions with well-researched arguments and relevant examples. While ‘Youth issues’ continues to be a popular topic, it is noticeable that the focus has shifted towards ‘Literature and the Arts’ and ‘Stories from the past’. Among the presentations, a significant number explored subtopics such as 郭德纲将相声商业化应该被肯定 (The commercialisation of Xiang Sheng by Guo Degang should be recognised), 正确评价翁同和 (The correct evaluation of Weng Tonghe is recommended), 我们应该传承洪水神话 (The flood mythologies should be inherited) and 影视作品应发掘狐狸形象的多重文化 (Film and television works should explore the multiple cultural representations of the fox). Many students emphasised the importance of appreciating the artistic value of 华语黑帮电影 (Chinese gangster films), the significance of 吴语文艺创作 (Wu language literature) and the traditions of 本土侦探文学 (local detective fiction). Additionally, innovative expressions were observed from students who chose the subtopics, such as 方言应该被传承 (Dialects should be preserved). These diverse subtopics reflect a growing interest in literature and the Arts, with students addressing both cultural preservation and creative innovation and, importantly, presenting a clear stance in their presentations.
* communicated information, ideas and opinions very effectively, were highly engaged with assessors and had excellent pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. Presentations that scored highly communicated information, ideas and opinions very effectively. These students brought forward unique, innovative and valid ideas that showcased their ability to think critically and creatively. They offered fresh perspectives that were both authentic and insightful, drawing connections between theoretical elements and practical trends in innovative ways. In addition, their presentations were well organised, with each section logically structured, allowing the audience to easily follow the progression of ideas. Their use of language was also highly effective; students demonstrated a good command of language, maintaining an ideal speech rate and tone that kept their audience engaged. The pace was steady, neither too fast nor too slow, allowing listeners to absorb and reflect on the information without feeling overwhelmed or disengaged. Moreover, their tone varied appropriately to emphasise key points, further enhancing the effectiveness of their delivery. This combination of high-quality ideas, flawless structure and effective communication created a harmonious balance between content and presentation.
* effectively used evidence from the texts studied to support their stance. Students who scored highly effectively used evidence from the studied texts to support their stance, demonstrating a strong ability to integrate relevant materials into their arguments. They carefully selected specific examples from the texts that directly aligned with their positions, ensuring that each piece of evidence was both pertinent and compelling. They skilfully analysed these examples, providing insightful commentary that connected the evidence to the broader themes of their presentations. This seamless integration of evidence not only strengthened their arguments but also demonstrated a deep understanding of the texts, allowing them to present their positions in a clear, authoritative and persuasive manner.
* used sophisticated vocabulary and grammatical structures accurately and appropriately. Some students’ choice of words was precise and varied, demonstrating a strong command of the language and an ability to express complex ideas with clarity and nuance. In addition, these students skilfully employed various and complex literary devices, ensuring that their sentences were both grammatically correct and stylistically sophisticated. This mastery of language not only made their presentations more compelling but also showcased their ability to engage with the material at a high academic level, aligning with the language proficiency expected of native speakers.

Areas for improvement

In preparation for the examination, students could:

* rely less on cue cards. Using cue cards excessively can impact performance. Some students brought cue cards that were larger than the prescribed size of 20 cm × 12.5 cm, while others included an excessive amount of information, whether in dot points or full sentences. Some students used their cue cards inappropriately by reading directly from them, which affected their overall presentation skills. As a result, their engagement with the assessors was diminished, negatively impacting the quality of their performance. The instructions in the exam specifications clearly state that cue cards should contain brief speaker’s notes in point form, and students should use them to guide their responses, not as a script. It is crucial that students follow these guidelines to improve their interaction with assessors and demonstrate their speaking proficiency more effectively.
* strengthen the clarity of their stance. A small number of students, while providing information and facts from the studied texts, did not take their analysis to the next level by clearly expressing an opinion or a stance. Instead of synthesising the evidence to demonstrate critical thinking, they often merely retold the stories without offering in-depth analysis. For example, when discussing topics like 不同时代的教育理念和教育观/审美/社交方式 (the educational philosophies and views/aesthetic/socialising manners of different eras), some students did not manage to produce a clear stance and authentic viewpoints on this matter. Additionally, students need to improve the logic in their reasoning. For example, when discussing why the critical thinking/resilience of 曾国藩 (Zeng Guofan) led to a positive outcome some students did not fully explain the connection between Zeng’s actions and the achievement of a favourable goal. Strengthening these aspects will help students present a more coherent and well-supported argument that clearly demonstrates their perspective on the issue.
* present an extensive range of highly relevant information, ideas and opinions related to the subtopic, and in a logical manner. Some students did not have adequate preparation to support their presentations with an extensive range of highly relevant information, ideas and opinions. For example, in subtopics such as 郭德纲/姜文对相声/电影艺术发展的贡献值得肯定 (Guo Degang/Jiang Wen’s contribution to the development of Xiangsheng/films deserves recognition), while the subject was appropriate, students struggled to provide a broad discussion of Guo/Jiang’s work. They failed to draw from a wide range of his performances or critically engage with his influence on the art form, demonstrating a lack of in-depth research. Similarly, in subtopics such as 苏轼/李白/唐伯虎的贬谪经历塑造了他的文学巅峰 (The exile experiences of Su Shi, Li Bai and Tang Bohu shaped their literary peaks), students often presented facts without establishing clear cause-and-effect relationships, resulting in a logical gap. They mentioned the exiles of these figures but did not explore how these experiences directly influenced their literary achievements, leaving the argument underdeveloped. In another example, subtopics such as 年轻人应直面焦虑/内卷 (Young people should face anxiety head-on / Unhealthy competition) were often addressed in a conceptual way, with some students simply referencing famous figures who faced these challenges, but lacking concrete examples or detailed analysis. These students did not fully develop their points, missing the opportunity to illustrate how these figures’ responses to challenges could be applied to contemporary issues of anxiety / unhealthy competition. Overall, the lack of comprehensive preparation and critical analysis hindered their ability to present a compelling, well-supported argument.
* practise intonation, stress and tempo. Many students would benefit from further practice in areas such as intonation, stress and tempo to improve their cadence and overall speaking performance. In particular, some students struggled with varying their tone and emphasising key words, which are essential for effective communication and clarity. Additionally, the pace at which some students spoke was either too fast, making it difficult to follow, or too slow, hindering the natural flow of their responses. To enhance their communication skills, it is important for students to focus on practising these aspects of speech, as they play a critical role in engaging listeners and conveying ideas more clearly.
* focus on linking their content to practical and real life. While theoretical knowledge is important, grounding their presentations in everyday experiences allows students to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the topic and makes their communication more relatable and engaging. Presentations that stay at a conceptual level can come across as vague or disconnected from reality, which may fail to effectively engage the listener or convey the intended message. By incorporating real-world applications, students can make their ideas more concrete, relevant and impactful, ultimately improving the quality and clarity of their communication.
* select a subtopic that is thoughtful and balanced. Students are encouraged to carefully select subtopics that are thoughtful and balanced, avoiding those that may trigger negative emotions or emotional responses and potentially distract from the discussion. Instead, students should choose a subtopic within the theme of ‘Tradition and change in Chinese-speaking communities’, focusing on one of the three specified areas: ‘Literature and the Arts’, ‘Stories from the past’ or ‘Youth issues’. It is essential for students to select a subtopic from one of these topics, adopting a clear stance while also providing enough room for assessors to engage with and present an opposing viewpoint. This approach ensures a well-rounded and respectful discussion, demonstrating critical thinking and the ability to consider multiple perspectives.

Section 2: Discussion

What students did well

In the 2024 examination, students:

* were highly engaged with the assessors and effectively used appropriate style and register. Many students demonstrated a high level of engagement with the assessors, effectively maintaining an interactive dialogue throughout the discussion. Many of them were able to respond thoughtfully to the questions posed and actively contributed to the discussion, ensuring a dynamic exchange. These students showed a strong understanding of the appropriate style and register, adjusting their tone and language to suit the context of the conversation. This ability to engage in a back-and-forth exchange, with clear and relevant answers, not only showcased their language proficiency but also their capacity to maintain a professional and respectful conversation with the assessors.
* provided an extensive range of highly relevant and original information, ideas and opinions on the issue selected. Many students provided an extensive range of highly relevant and original information, ideas and opinions on the issues they selected, demonstrating a deep understanding of their chosen topics. These students were well prepared and responded thoughtfully to the assessors’ questions, drawing on their own insights to guide the conversation. For example, when students provided arguments such as 传统文化应融入流行元素/流行音乐应融入传统元素 (Popular elements should be incorporated in the inheritance of traditional cultures / Popular music should incorporate trending elements), some of them backed up their position with ample and relevant examples.
* clarified, elaborated on or defended ideas and opinions related to the issue selected very effectively. Many students demonstrated a strong ability to clarify, elaborate on and defend their ideas and opinions related to the issue they selected. When faced with follow-up questions or challenges from the assessors, these students responded with confidence and depth, providing clear explanations and expanding on their initial points. They effectively defended their positions by offering well-reasoned arguments, supported by relevant examples and evidence. Their clear communication and well-developed responses contributed to a highly effective and engaging exchange.
* effectively responded to questions on the broad subtopic beyond the issue selected, including unfamiliar issues related to the subtopic. Many students effectively responded to questions that extended beyond the specific issue they selected, demonstrating a strong understanding of the broader subtopic. They were able to engage with unfamiliar issues related to the subtopic and provide insightful responses. For example, when discussing topics such as 要注重影视剧/社交媒体对年轻人的危害(We need to pay attention to the negative impact of film and television / social media on young people), some students not only addressed the direct effects but also explored related concerns, such as societal influences and cultural shifts, showing a wide-ranging perspective. This ability to navigate and discuss broader aspects of the subtopic reflected the students’ depth of knowledge and their readiness to engage with complex, multidimensional issues.
* made excellent use of evidence from the text studied to support their discussion. For some students this enhanced the depth and credibility of their arguments. For example, when discussing ideas such as 年轻人应该厚道/相信吃亏是福/以德报怨 (Young people should be kind-hearted / believe that suffering loss is a blessing/repay evil with kindness), some students not only expressed their opinions but also provided strong supporting evidence for each point, drawing from relevant examples in the text. This approach demonstrated a clear, logical structure in their reasoning, with each argument backed up by solid evidence. Their ability to weave together ideas and textual references with a strong sense of logical progression showcased their analytical skills and understanding of the material.

Areas for improvement

In preparation for the examination, students could:

* research the subtopic in depth to ensure an excellent range of information, ideas and opinions. Many students need to conduct more in-depth research on their chosen subtopics to ensure a comprehensive range of information, ideas and opinions. For example, while topics such as 郭德纲/冯小刚/张艺谋/周杰伦对相声/电影/音乐艺术发展的贡献值得肯定 (The contributions of Guo Degang, Feng Xiaogang, Zhang Yimou and Jay Chou to the development of Xiang Sheng [cross-talk], film, and music arts are worth acknowledging) were valid and interesting subjects, some students struggled to expand the discussion. They were unable to draw on a broad range of these figures’ works or delve deeply into their influence on the art forms, resulting in a superficial analysis. It is important for students to avoid choosing overly broad and abstract terms, such as Confucianism or Buddhism, unless they can fully explore and control the discussion with substantial content. Otherwise, these big terms can lead to weak and unfocused answers.
* practise elaborating on ideas and opinions, and being able to respond to unanticipated questions. Many students need to practise elaborating on their ideas and opinions and, particularly, providing substantial content. For example, when asked 如何做/方法论 (how to do it / approach methodology) types of questions, students should provide feasible and specific strategies rather than offering vague responses like ‘We need to cultivate independent thinking / resilience’. The focus of this type of question is on *how*. It is important for students to explain how to cultivate such skills, offering concrete examples and practical steps. Additionally, some students struggled to steer the conversation back to their main discussion points, showing difficulty in maintaining focus on the central theme. They often found it challenging to emphasise key aspects of the topic clearly, resulting in a more scattered or unfocused discussion. To improve, students should practise better control over the direction of the discussion, ensuring that their responses are relevant and directly related to the core issues.
* be able to refer to text references to support answers where appropriate. Some students only provided conclusions, but these conclusions often lacked the necessary supporting references from the texts. For example, when discussing topics like 年轻人应直面焦虑/挑战/困境/内卷 (Young people should face anxiety/challenges/dilemmas), some students offered conceptual descriptions of characters from the text but struggled to discuss specific works or experiences of these characters. Similarly, when addressing topics like 人需要旅行/行万里路/多读书 (One needs to travel widely / read many books), students were often unable to provide details about where the characters in the text travelled, which books they read, or what they gained from those experiences. This lack of connection between the students’ knowledge of the texts and the questions they are answering hinders the depth and relevance of their responses. To improve, students must learn to effectively integrate textual references into their answers, ensuring that their conclusions are well supported by specific examples and insights from the material they have studied.
* convey information learnt from sources but also express an opinion about it. Some students need to not only convey information learnt from sources but also express their own opinion about it. Merely repeating what has been learnt without offering personal insights can limit the depth of their responses. Additionally, some students struggled to clearly define key concepts. For example, many were unable to provide a coherent definition of terms like 偶像 (idol), 欲望 (desire) or 动力 (motivation), which weakened the overall clarity of their arguments. When discussing complex ideas such as 传统家长制 (traditional patriarchal systems), some students failed to explain the relationships between these concepts effectively. This lack of understanding of their own definitions and insufficient research into the concepts they presented led to vague or incomplete responses. Moreover, students sometimes struggled to highlight the uniqueness of their topics. For example, when discussing cultural topics like狐狸形象 (fox imagery) or 神话传说 (mythology) and 英雄传奇 (heroic legends), some students did not specify which particular cultures were being referred to and why these elements are unique in those cultures.
* avoid relying on pre-learned responses that do not address an assessor’s question. Some students need to avoid relying on pre-learned responses that do not directly address an assessor’s question. This often results in some students diverting from the topic, focusing on what they have prepared rather than engaging with the specific issues raised. For example, some students avoided addressing the question at hand and instead talked at length about pre-prepared content without connecting it to the assessor’s inquiry. This approach undermines the quality of the discussion, as it shows a lack of flexibility and critical thinking. To improve, students should practise responding to the specific questions posed by the assessors, ensuring their answers are relevant and tailored to the conversation rather than relying on rehearsed or irrelevant information.
* revise grammar. Many students need to revise their grammar during discussions, as their use of language tends to be too casual for the formal setting of an oral exam. This informal style can affect the clarity and professionalism of their responses. For example, using overly casual expressions or incorrect sentence structures may weaken the impact of their arguments and reduce their overall effectiveness. To improve, students should focus on using more precise, formal language, paying attention to grammar and sentence structure to ensure their responses are clear, coherent and appropriate for the academic context.
* improve the logic in their responses. Students need to improve the logic in their responses by avoiding repetitive, circular language and ensuring their arguments are coherent and well structured. Some students tended to go around in circles, repeating the same points without adding new insights, which weakened the clarity of their responses. Additionally, there were instances where students presented self-contradictory statements or failed to maintain a logical flow, leaving gaps in their reasoning. To improve, students should focus on developing clear, well-organised arguments where each point logically follows from the previous one, ensuring that their logic is consistent and complete.