2023 VCE Chinese First Language oral external assessment report

Refer to the relevant [study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx) and [examination criteria and specifications](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/Languages-index.aspx) for full details on this study and how it is assessed.

Section 1: Presentation

What the students did well

In 2023 students:

* communicated information, ideas and opinions effectively. Students demonstrated effective communication skills in presenting their ideas and opinions on subtopics related to Chinese language and culture. The presentations focused on the prescribed topics found under the theme of ‘Tradition and change in Chinese-speaking communities’. They covered a diverse range of subtopics from ‘Literature and the arts’, ‘Stories from the past’ and ‘Youth issues’. The students’ effective communication not only highlighted their in-depth understanding of their subtopic but also their ability to engage with complex cultural concepts.
* presented an extensive range of information, ideas and opinions.  Students delved into a wide array of subtopics, demonstrating they had thoroughly researched them by studying multiple texts. The majority of presentations were marked by a robust use of evidence from these texts, which was skilfully employed to support contentions and viewpoints. This approach highlighted the students’ deep engagement with the material and their ability to critically analyse and synthesise diverse perspectives.
* were highly engaged with the assessors through their adept use of both verbal and non-verbal communication skills. They used accurate expressions, hand gestures, facial expressions and a variety of cadences to enhance the clarity and impact of their presentations. This allowed them to convey their ideas and communicate and connect with the assessors more effectively.
* exhibited a high level of linguistic proficiency in their presentations, evidenced by their use of sophisticated vocabulary and grammatical structures. The thorough preparation of the majority of students was apparent in their confident and appropriate application of complex language. This not only demonstrated their deep understanding of the subject matter, but also their ability to convey their ideas in a clear, precise and nuanced manner. The accuracy and appropriateness of their language choices significantly enhanced the overall quality of their presentations.
* demonstrated excellent pronunciation in their presentations, a testament to their linguistic skills and thorough preparation. The pronunciation of a vast majority of students was clear and precise; every word was distinctly articulated and easily understood. This level of proficiency in pronunciation contributed significantly to the effectiveness of their communication, allowing them to convey their ideas with clarity and precision. The students’ attention to accurate pronunciation not only facilitated better understanding but also reflected their strong grasp of the language.
* effectively presented a distinct stance on issues related to their chosen subtopics, which was supported by carefully selected evidence from the texts studied. Many students not only articulated their positions with clarity, but also reinforced them through detailed analysis and relevant textual references.
* were able to speak fluently about their subtopic within the allotted three-minute timeframe, demonstrating excellent time management skills. This control over timing ensured that the vast majority of presentations were concise yet comprehensive, allowing students to convey their points effectively without rushing or exceeding the time limit.

Areas for improvement

Students should:

* choose an appropriate subtopic. They should avoid selecting subtopics that are not ideally suited for this examination, specifically those relating to sensitive areas such as religion or politics. It is recommended that students focus on subtopics that are positive, practical and relevant to real-life situations. These subtopics should not only be appropriate but also rich in content, offering ample opportunities for meaningful discussion and deeper exploration. Selecting such subtopics ensures a constructive and engaging dialogue with the assessors later in the discussion section, while avoiding subjects that may be inappropriate or too controversial for this setting.
* strengthen the clarity of their stance. A few students struggled to clearly define their stance, often limiting their arguments to basic information from the texts without delving into deeper analytical insights. To improve the effectiveness of their presentations, it is crucial for these students to adopt a more distinct stance. This should be supported by comprehensive analysis, which goes beyond mere description and demonstrates a critical engagement with the subject matter. Such an approach will not only clarify their position, but also add depth and persuasiveness to their arguments.
* strengthen the logic of their arguments. In several presentations, there was a noticeable need for the students to enhance the logic and coherence of their arguments. The topic sentences in these presentations often lacked the necessary clarity and variety, resulting in a limited range of perspectives and arguments. While many students commendably supported their stances from individual （个人）, social （社会）, and national （国家） perspectives, it's important to note that this approach may not be suitable for a variety of other contentions. Different subtopics may require distinct perspectives or frameworks for a more appropriate and effective argumentation. Students need to intertwine their arguments on their selected subtopic more effectively, focusing on maintaining logical coherence. This includes ensuring that the texts they choose to refer to are directly relevant to their main contention and that there is a clear, logical thread linking their various arguments. Such a methodical approach in utilising evidence from the texts will not only reinforce their stance but also enhance the depth of their analysis. A presentation that weaves together well-chosen textual evidence with logically consistent arguments is likely to be more compelling and cohesive.
* prepare more adequately to support the presentation with information, ideas and opinions. A few students did not incorporate texts into their presentations, which limited the depth and credibility of their arguments. To enhance the quality of their presentations, students are encouraged to prepare more thoroughly by integrating evidence from multiple texts. This approach not only substantiates their stance but also enriches their presentation with a variety of information, ideas and opinions. Adequate preparation in this manner will significantly strengthen the persuasiveness and impact of their arguments.
* practise intonation, stress and tempo. To enhance the effectiveness of their delivery, students should pay careful attention to intonation, stress and tempo during their presentation. It is important to avoid speaking too quickly or too slowly. The pace of speech should be adjusted to ensure clarity in order to maintain the audience's engagement. A well-modulated tempo, along with appropriate stress and intonation, can significantly improve the overall impact of the presentation, making the communication more dynamic and comprehensible.
* practise using repair strategies. Some students need to develop and practice effective repair strategies to smoothly navigate through moments when they get stuck or make mistakes during their presentations. It's crucial for them to learn how to quickly recover and continue their train of thought without losing composure. This skill not only maintains the flow of the presentation, but also demonstrates resilience and adaptability in communication. Developing such strategies will enhance their overall presentation skills and confidence.
* build appropriate vocabulary. Students should avoid using language features that might cause ambiguity, confusion or misunderstanding. For instance, presenting a big section of abstruse and uncommonly used 文言文 (Classical Chinese/literary language used in ancient China) without necessary explanation. Other examples that may cause misunderstanding include the use of 同音词 (homonyms), overly complex literary language and metaphor or analogy without clear details and context.
* ensure they understand the oral examination requirements. To address this, they are encouraged to consult the study design, oral exam specifications, and the demonstration video available on the VCAA website. This will provide them with a clearer understanding of what to expect and help them better prepare for the examination.

Section 2: Discussion

What the students did well

In 2023 students:

* demonstrated their ability to effectively communicate information, ideas and opinions. This was particularly evident in how the majority of students understood the intention behind the assessors' questions and responded in a manner that was both clear and insightful. Their adept handling of queries and their articulate responses highlighted strong comprehension and communication skills. This level of effective communication significantly contributed to the overall quality of their discussions.
* displayed a high level of engagement with the assessors, effectively employing an appropriate style and register in their communication. This was evident in the way the majority of students tailored their language to suit the formal context of the assessment, while also incorporating relevant examples from a variety of texts studied to illustrate their points.
* showcased excellent pronunciation during the discussion with the assessors. This proficiency in pronunciation reflected their comfort with the language, enhancing the overall quality of the discourse.
* distinguished themselves by providing a wide array of highly relevant and original information, ideas and opinions on their chosen issues. For example, in discussions on the topic ‘Chinese literature and the arts’, students explored classical works and their modern interpretations, skilfully integrating historical context with contemporary relevance. Their discussions were enriched with original interpretations and lesser-known facts. Students not only demonstrated their in-depth understanding, but also emphasised their unique viewpoints, making their contributions both supportive of their stance and engaging.
* displayed impressive adaptability and knowledge by responding effectively to general questions on the broader subtopic beyond their selected issue, including unfamiliar aspects related to the subtopic. For example, when discussions shifted from their chosen issue of technological impacts on youth to broader youth issues in China, such as the changing educational aspirations and career choices of young people, students adeptly navigated these unanticipated areas. They demonstrated a remarkable ability to quickly adapt and provide insightful, well-informed responses, reflecting a deep and comprehensive understanding of the broader context of the chosen issues.

Areas for improvement

Students should:

* research subtopics in depth to ensure an excellent range of information, ideas and opinions. Some students encountered difficulties in the extended discussion segments, indicating a need for more in-depth research and preparation of their subtopics. Their responses often reflected a limited range of information, which restricted the breadth and depth of their discussions. To enhance their performance, students could benefit from preparing a comprehensive list of potential questions that assessors might ask, focusing on areas of their presentation likely to spark further interest or areas worthy of deeper exploration. Such a proactive approach would encourage a broader and more thorough research effort, enabling students to respond to assessors’ queries in a more structured, meaningful and formal manner, as opposed to offering responses that might appear scattered or casual.
* practise using evidence from texts to defend and reinforce their own viewpoint. A few students struggled to connect their responses directly back to the texts to support and defend their own stance. Enhancing this skill would enable them to present more cohesive and persuasive arguments, firmly rooted in textual evidence, thereby strengthening the overall impact of their stance. It also helps make the discussion more compelling and substantiated.
* practise elaborating on ideas and opinions and being able to respond to unanticipated questions. It is essential for students to understand the essence of the assessors' inquiries in order to respond directly and effectively. Students should aim to be succinct yet comprehensive, ensuring their answers are directly relevant, and address the assessors' questions thoroughly. Additionally, taking the initiative to expand on their responses with a broader and more detailed range of information, presented logically, can significantly enhance the discussion. Incorporating a variety of examples to support their stance from multiple perspectives will further enrich the quality of their discourse, and demonstrate both depth and breadth in their understanding.
* cite text references to support answers where appropriate. Students need to demonstrate a thorough familiarity with the texts they have studied and the concepts they discuss with the assessors. It's important for them to substantiate their assertions and avoid unsupported judgments. Each point they make should be backed by appropriate text references or sound reasoning. This practice not only strengthens the credibility of their arguments but also shows a deep understanding of the material, allowing for a more meaningful and informed discussion.
* convey information learnt from sources but also express an opinion about it. It is essential for students to establish a clear connection between the information presented and the assessors’ questions. This involves articulately expressing their personal opinions and interpretations, thereby demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the subtopic. This would create a meaningful dialogue that not only showcases their knowledge, but also their ability to critically analyse and engage with the subject matter. For instance, when discussing the topic of ‘Youth issues in China’, a student might reference a study on the changing career aspirations among Chinese youth. Beyond merely presenting this information, the student could then offer their own opinion on how economic developments and cultural shifts are influencing these career choices. They might argue that these changes reflect a broader transformation in societal values, drawing parallels with their own experiences or observations. By relating this back to the assessor's question, perhaps about the impact of globalisation on youth, the student not only displays their knowledge of the topic but also their ability to critically analyse and personalise the information, thus creating a richer, more engaging discussion.
* avoid relying on pre-learned responses that do not address an assessor’s question. Students should focus on actively listening to the assessors’ questions and ensure that their responses directly relate to the issue selected, while also supporting and defending their contention and stance. It's crucial that they avoid merely reciting pre-learned responses that do not address the assessors' specific inquiries. The ability to adapt their responses to the questions asked demonstrates a deeper understanding of the subject and a more thoughtful engagement with the assessment process. This approach not only shows attentiveness, but also the ability to think critically and respond dynamically to the conversation at hand.
* revise grammar. Some students need to improve the accuracy of their grammar in the discussion section of the oral examination. The language used in the discussion should be fitting for the formal context of the examination, steering clear of overly casual or informal expressions. To achieve this, students should dedicate time to prepare for the discussion, focusing on the correct and appropriate use of language. This includes revising the use of certain Chinese expressions, such as 推波助澜 (add fuel to the flames) and 急功近利 (eager for quick success), to ensure they are used accurately and contextually. Additionally, students should exercise caution with popular internet language such as YYDS (eternal god), as such phrases can be inappropriate for a formal examination setting. Attention to these details will enhance the overall quality and appropriateness of the students’ language use.