2023 VCE Chinese First Language (NHT) oral external assessment report

General comments

The Chinese First Language oral examination assessed students’ knowledge and skills in using spoken language.

The examination had two sections: a presentation of approximately three minutes and a discussion of approximately seven minutes.

Students were assessed on:

* their capacity to present the information appropriately and effectively
* the information, opinions and ideas they presented related to one of the subtopics drawn from one of the prescribed topics ‘Literature and the arts’, ‘Stories from the past’ and ‘Youth issues’
* their capacity to maintain and advance an exchange appropriately and effectively
* the relevance, breadth and depth of information, ideas and opinions.

Details of the assessment criteria and performance descriptors are published on the VCAA website. It is important that all teachers and students are familiar with the criteria and descriptors and that teachers use them as part of their examination preparation. This will help teachers to support their students to prepare for a lively and meaningful exchange with assessors. Although there are similarities between the assessment criteria for the presentation and discussion sections of the examination, the criteria assess two very different aspects of performance. Students who are well prepared are generally able to demonstrate their abilities and proficiency in the language.

Most students came to the oral examination reasonably well prepared and demonstrated good understanding of the requirements and procedures of the oral examination. The procedure of the oral examination is stated in the oral examination specifications and the revised First Language oral examination video, both available on the [VCAA website](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/Chinese-First-Language.aspx).

Specific information

Section 1 – Presentation

Students presented for three minutes on an issue related to the subtopic that they had selected for their extended study of language and culture, drawn from one of the prescribed topics found under the theme ‘Tradition and change in Chinese-speaking communities’. The prescribed topics are ‘Literature and the arts’, ‘Stories from the past’ and ‘Youth issues’.

Students who gave high-scoring presentations:

* communicated information, ideas and opinions very effectively
* were highly engaged with the assessors and effectively used appropriate style and register
* used sophisticated vocabulary and grammatical structures accurately and appropriately
* had excellent pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo
* presented an extensive range of highly relevant information, ideas and opinions related to the subtopic
* effectively elaborated and reflected on information, ideas and opinions presented on the issue
* presented a very clear stance on an issue related to the chosen subtopic
* effectively used evidence from the texts studied to support their stance.

The vast majority of students’ presentations were based on their selected subtopics related to Chinese language and culture. In 2023, students presented a wide range and variety of subtopics in their oral examination. The majority of students demonstrated a clear stance and were able to use evidence from the texts studied to support their own ideas and opinions effectively. They generally delivered a fluent presentation in three minutes. However, some students’ stance in their presentation was not clear enough, or their arguments were limited to basic information from the texts studied without the necessary in-depth analysis. Some students still delivered a one-minute introduction, which is no longer required for the oral examination. Topic sentences in some students’ presentations lacked clarity and diversity. This limited the range of arguments and perspectives presented. A substantial number of students supported their stance from individual (个人), social (社会) and national (国家) levels. Greater diversity in argumentation is encouraged for a more comprehensive understanding and expression that adapt to the chosen subtopic more efficiently.

Criterion 1

Presentations that scored highly by Criterion 1:

* communicated information, ideas and opinions very effectively
* highly engaged with the assessors and effectively used appropriate style and register
* used sophisticated vocabulary and grammatical structures accurately and appropriately
* had excellent pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo.

Students are reminded to:

* be mindful of their language usage in an oral exam context. For example, considering whether 悦纳 is the best expression for ‘to happily accept’ could make a difference in the effectiveness of communication
* avoid using language features that might cause ambiguity, confusion or misunderstanding. For example, it is likely to cause barriers in the understanding of assessors if a student presents an extended recitation of obscure and uncommonly seen 文言文 （Classical Chinese / literary language used in ancient China) without appropriate explanation. Other examples that caused misunderstanding were the use of 同音词（homonyms), overly complex literary language, metaphor or analogy
* make effective use of verbal and non-verbal language, such as advanced language expressions (e.g. 成语、俗语 (four-character phrases / idioms and proverbs), intonation and tempo in a natural manner. This will improve the effectiveness of the communication
* avoid speaking too fast or too slowly – the pace should contribute to the effectiveness of the delivery of the message.

Criterion 2

Presentations that scored highly by Criterion 2:

* presented an extensive range of highly relevant information, ideas and opinions on the subtopic
* effectively elaborated and reflected on information, ideas and opinions presented on the issue
* presented a very clear stance on an issue related to the chosen subtopic
* effectively used evidence from the texts studied to support their stance.

Students are reminded to:

* choose a subtopic that contains practical and real-life meaning. It should provide the assessors with enough space to prompt further discussion. For example, subtopics that are very broad and general risk resulting in a presentation that is too hollow, providing assessors with very limited scope for challenging questions against which students defend their own stance in later discussions
* craft concise, direct and clear topic sentences that adapt to the chosen subtopic, for example, the layout of individual (个人), social (社会) and national (国家) levels might not be the best structure for some subtopics
* diversify their arguments and use a range of perspectives to enrich their presentations.

Section 2 – Discussion

Following the presentation, each student discussed aspects of their selected issue with the assessors and clarified the points they presented.

Students who engaged in high-scoring discussions:

* communicated information, ideas and opinions very effectively
* were highly engaged with the assessors and effectively used appropriate style and register
* used sophisticated vocabulary and grammatical structures accurately and appropriately
* had excellent pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo
* provided an extensive range of highly relevant and original information, ideas and opinions on the issue selected
* clarified, elaborated on or defended ideas and opinions related to the issue selected very effectively
* effectively responded to general questions on the broad subtopic beyond the issue selected, including unfamiliar issues related to the subtopic
* made excellent use of evidence from the texts studied to support their discussion.

It should be noted that during the discussions:

* students may be asked a variety of questions with varying levels of difficulty. Questions may also be asked in a different order from what the students might anticipate
* students may be asked questions on the author’s/director’s/composer’s/artist’s intent, as well as the relationship between the context in which the text was produced, the text itself, the author and the audience
* assessors may interrupt students to ask questions during the discussion; this should be regarded as a normal process in a discussion
* normal variation in assessor’s use of language (e.g. tone of voice) is acceptable.

Many students could defend their stance by effectively using the evidence from the texts studied. However, a number of students found the extended discussion challenging as their preparation for the discussion was not comprehensive enough.

Criterion 3

Discussions that scored highly by Criterion 3:

* communicated information, ideas and opinions very effectively
* were highly engaged with the assessors and effectively used appropriate style and register
* used sophisticated vocabulary and grammatical structures accurately and appropriately
* had excellent pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo.

Students are reminded to:

* adopt language appropriate to the context of an oral examination, rather than being too casual or too informal
* when preparing for the discussion section, put effort into structuring their language in order to convey their thoughts and opinions. An example of a thorough and comprehensive preparation for the discussion session can include a list of questions that might be asked by the assessors (e.g. what areas from my presentation might attract the assessors’ interest for further discussion and what areas are worthy of further discussion with the assessors?). This can help students respond to the assessors’ questions in a more meaningful and formal manner, rather than the answers being disjointed and too casual.

Criterion 4

Discussions that scored highly by Criterion 4:

* provided an extensive range of highly relevant and original information, ideas and opinions on the issue selected
* clarified, elaborated on or defended ideas and opinions related to the issue selected very effectively
* responded effectively to general questions on the broad subtopic beyond the issue selected, including unfamiliar issues related to the subtopic
* made excellent use of evidence from the texts studied to support their discussion.

Students are reminded to:

* comprehend the core of the assessors’ questions and respond in a direct and effective manner
* get straight to the point when answering the assessors’ questions and make sure answers are highly relevant to the questions asked
* link their answers back to the issue selected, as well as support and defend their contention and stance
* be proactive and take initiative to elaborate on answers by providing a wider range of information in more depth and in a logical manner. Providing varied examples to support their own stance from multiple perspectives would enhance the quality of the discussion
* be familiar enough with the texts they have studied and the concepts they bring into the discussions with the assessors, rather than relying solely on memorising hollow concepts
* avoid unsupported judgments. Each assertion should be delivered with conviction and be supported by evidence or sound reasoning.

More information

Refer to the [VCE Chinese First Language study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/Chinese-First-Language.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.