

2021 VCE Chinese Second Language oral external assessment report

General comments

The 2021 Chinese Second Language oral examination assessed the *VCE Chinese Second Language Study Design 2020–2024* and examination specifications. It is important that students and teachers familiarise themselves with the specifications for oral examinations, available on the [VCE Chinese Second Language examinations webpage](#). Students and teachers are also reminded that a [series of videos](#) has been produced to help with preparation for the oral examinations.

It should be noted that during the oral examination:

- students may be asked a variety of questions of varying levels of difficulty. Questions may also be asked in a different order from the one that students anticipate
- assessors may interrupt students to ask questions during either section of the examination; this should be regarded as a normal process in a discussion
- assessors may also repeat or rephrase questions
- normal variation in assessor body language is acceptable.

Students were generally well prepared for the 2021 Chinese Second Language oral examination and demonstrated a good understanding of the examination's specifications. Most students interacted confidently with the assessors and responded appropriately to questions in both sections. Students who scored highly not only used relevant and complex expressions but also demonstrated very good nonverbal communication skills, such as voice tone and body language. Some students, however, seem to have relied on memorised answers and accordingly could not always respond to questions. It is important that students listen carefully to the questions and apply what they have learned to respond to them with relevant information and opinions.

Specific information

Section 1 – Conversation

Section 1 of the examination involves a general conversation between the student and the two assessors about the student's personal world and their interactions with the Chinese language and culture as learners. It is an organic conversation about the student's personal world.

The majority of students were able to talk about their family life, school life, leisure and hobbies, friends and future aspirations. Many spoke confidently about their interaction with the language and culture, discussing how they learned Chinese and what they found interesting about learning the language. Some even told the assessors that they celebrated the important Chinese festivals.

Students who scored highly maintained a natural flow to the conversation and gave lively and personal examples to illustrate their points. They used authentic language including, in some cases, well-known idioms and proverbs. Students who did not score well seemed to have difficulty understanding the questions. Students are encouraged to practise key vocabulary and grammar related to the theme of ‘The individual’ to improve their ability to understand, interpret and convey information during the conversation. Particular attention should be paid to pronunciation and accuracy of expression. Inaccurate pronunciation of some Chinese words can change their meaning and lead to misunderstandings. For example, 少林武术 (shàolín wǔshù, Shaolin Martial Arts) was pronounced 少年武术 (shàonián wǔshù, Teenagers’ Martial Arts); 护士 (hùshi, nurse) was pronounced 忽视 (hūshì, ignore); and 年级 (niánjí, year level) became 年纪 (niánjī, age).

Students are also reminded to listen to questions carefully and respond accordingly. For example, if the question is ‘What is your favourite sport?’ the response should be limited to one sport (‘I like ... the most’) only.

Section 2 – Discussion

Following the conversation, the student is required to discuss their chosen subtopic and the supporting visual material that they have brought with them.

The specifications require the student to explore aspects of the subtopic, including information, opinions and ideas. It is important to carefully consider the choice of subtopic and supporting image when preparing for this section of the examination. Images that included rich information provided more opportunity for students to be able to offer a greater depth and range of information, ideas, opinions and reflections about the subtopic. While the quality of the visual stimulus was not assessed, students who selected images that were easy to share with the assessors found it easier to communicate their ideas.

Students are reminded that it is not the image that is being assessed – it is the quality of the discussion. Students should therefore select an image that adequately enables them to integrate the image into a discussion about their selected subtopic.

In 2021, students chose a wide range of subtopics from the prescribed themes ‘The Chinese-speaking communities’ and ‘The world around us’. In addition to the popular choices of Chinese festivals, Chinese food and tea, places of interest, famous people and paintings, students chose subtopics on contemporary society, environment and sustainability, and innovation in science and technology. There was a noticeable increase in the number of students choosing science and technology.

Students who scored highly in this section used complex and accurate language and displayed a thorough understanding of their subtopic. They competently analysed and summarised information, ideas and opinions from their learning materials, and applied the relevant key knowledge appropriately.

Areas for improvement include the following:

- When choosing a subtopic, students should take into consideration their level of language competence and familiarity with or exposure to the subtopic. Students who chose subtopics suitable for their level of competence or that they related to generally performed better in the discussion.
- Students should have comprehensive knowledge of their subtopic and be prepared to respond to a variety of questions on different aspects of their subtopic. Students who focused on two or three aspects of their subtopic and talked at length about them often were unable to answer questions related to other aspects of the subtopic. It is important that students listen carefully to assessors and only provide responses that are relevant and help carry the discussion forward.
- Students are reminded that the image they select to support their discussion should not be a collage of images nor should it include any writing or key words.