



Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board



Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate of Education Advanced Level Higher 2 (2027)

China Studies in English (Syllabus 9628)

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1 INTRODUCTION

The China Studies in English (CSE) curriculum focuses on studying developments in contemporary China from circa 2000 to the present day through an examination of its economy, politics, society and international relations. The curriculum aims to equip students with relevant knowledge on contemporary developments in China, develop their critical thinking and information literacy to understand these developments, and instil in them an awareness of the regional and global implications of China's rise. It also seeks to develop China-conversant citizens who can appreciate Singapore's interests and perspectives in its engagement with China, contribute in their own capacity to further Singapore-China interactions and harness the dynamic opportunities that China can offer. To this end, the curriculum seeks to achieve the following student outcomes:

- (a) A China-conversant individual who is knowledgeable about contemporary developments in China and sensitive to China's context;
- (b) A critical thinker who exercises sound reasoning through considering different perspectives and using evidence to understand complex issues in contemporary China;
- (c) A globally aware individual who appreciates regional and global issues and trends through the study of China's role as a regional and global actor; and
- (d) An information-literate individual who accesses, analyses, evaluates and uses different types of information about contemporary China critically and effectively.

1.1 FEATURES OF THE CURRICULUM



Content Dimensions and Key Issues (Inner Ring)

The curriculum aims to develop students' understanding of contemporary China across the content dimensions of China's economy, politics, society and international relations. These four content dimensions provide the essential knowledge domains to develop a multi-disciplinary understanding of contemporary China.

The H2 CSE syllabus covers the four dimensions through the study of four Key Issues – China's economic development and its sustainability, governing China and its challenges, Chinese society and its transformation, and China's foreign policy and its implications. Each issue is foregrounded by one dimension. In the course of studying these Key Issues, students will have opportunities to connect knowledge from different dimensions to understand the complexity of issues in contemporary China.

Issues-based Approach (Middle Ring)

The Issues-based Approach is the core pedagogical framework for CSE. Studying contemporary China through issues encourages the use of constructivist pedagogies such as inquiry-based learning to guide students in identifying inquiry questions, exploring different perspectives, gathering evidence and reaching reasoned conclusions. The Issues-based Approach engages students in adopting multi-disciplinary and conceptual lenses to study the Key Issues, exercising critical thinking skills to evaluate and synthesise multiple perspectives and using information literacy to interpret and evaluate different sources of information.

21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes (Outer Ring)

The curriculum is aligned with MOE's Framework for 21st Century Competencies (21CC) and Student Outcomes. Students have opportunities to hone their critical thinking by considering different perspectives and evaluating evidence to understand complex issues in contemporary China. The study of China's domestic developments and its international relations in CSE helps students appreciate the interconnections between China, Asia and the wider world from a Singapore perspective, and supports the development of students' global awareness and cross-cultural skills. In the course of studying contemporary China, the exposure to different sources of information allows students to develop information literacy in accessing, analysing, evaluating and using different types of information critically and effectively.

2 AIMS

H2 China Studies in English (CSE) aims to develop students' understanding of contemporary China by encouraging them to:

- (a) examine key issues related to contemporary China's economic, political and social developments, and its international relations;
- (b) develop skills in the selection, application, analysis and evaluation of information related to contemporary China;
- (c) develop skills in evaluating and synthesising multiple perspectives to arrive at an informed judgement of issues related to contemporary China and to make well-considered recommendations to address these issues; and
- (d) communicate substantiated arguments on key issues about contemporary China in a clear and well-structured manner.

3 ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

Candidates are expected to:

AO1: Knowledge and Understanding

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of issues and concepts relevant to contemporary China, across the content dimensions of economy, politics, society and international relations

AO2: Analysis and Evaluation of Issues

- critically examine issues and developments
- analyse, evaluate and synthesise different perspectives on issues
- construct coherent and well-substantiated arguments
- make judgements and reach conclusions based on reasoned consideration of issues

AO3: Interpretation and Evaluation of Information

- interpret, analyse and evaluate different sources of information in response to given issues
- analyse perspectives across different sources
- make judgements and reach conclusions based on evaluation of information
- make well-supported recommendations to address issues

4 SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT

4.1 ASSESSMENT MODE

The assessment comprises two papers. Paper 1 (Case Studies) and Paper 2 (Essays). Candidates are required to offer both papers.

Candidates will receive the question papers in hard copy. A digital answer booklet will be provided with each question paper. Candidates are required to type their responses in the digital answer booklet.

4.2 SPECIFICATION GRID

| Paper | Description | Assessment Objective | Marks | Overall weighting | Duration |
|---------------------|---|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 (Case Studies) | Candidates answer questions from two compulsory case studies. | AO1 + AO2 + AO3 | 60 marks | 40% | 2 hours 45 minutes |
| | <u>Section A</u> The first case study focuses on interpretation, analysis and evaluation of information. Candidates answer four part-questions based on five sources. | | Section A: 35 marks | | |
| | <u>Section B</u> The second case study focuses on analysis, evaluation and making recommendations to address issues. Candidates answer one question based on four sources. | | Section B: 25 marks | | |

| Paper | Description | Assessment Objective | Marks | Overall weighting | Duration |
|---------------|--|----------------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 2 (Essays) | <p>Candidates answer three questions.</p> <p>Section A Candidates answer one compulsory question on any of the four Key Issues in the syllabus.</p> <p>Section B Candidates answer two questions. Three questions will be set on any of the four Key Issues in the syllabus.</p> | AO1 + AO2 | 90 marks | 60% | 2 hours 30 minutes |

Note: AO1 forms part of testing of AO2 and AO3

4.3 DESCRIPTION OF COMPONENTS

4.3.1 PAPER 1 (CASE STUDIES)

Candidates are required to answer questions from two compulsory case studies. Each case study will be set on a different Key Issue. In each case study, sources with different perspectives will be provided. The paper will comprise both text and non-text sources (e.g. maps, photographs, diagrams, graphs, data tables, cartoons and posters). While candidates are required to use their knowledge and understanding of contemporary China to interpret and evaluate these sources, specialised knowledge of other disciplines will not be required.

The first case study will comprise a collection of five sources and no more than four A4 pages in length, on any one of the four Key Issues in the syllabus content. Candidates are required to answer four part-questions that assess the following skills:

- Interpret, explain and analyse different types of information on contemporary China
- Compare perspectives from different sources
- Assess the strengths and limitations of information as evidence
- Synthesise and evaluate information to test a hypothesis

The second case study will comprise a collection of four sources and no more than three A4 pages in length, on any one of the four Key Issues in the syllabus content. Candidates are required to answer one question that assesses the following skills:

- Evaluate views about issues and make well-supported recommendations to address issues

The Case Studies questions will be assessed using a generic levels of response mark scheme, which involves qualitative judgements and awards marks according to the level of skill or understanding in the answer.

For details on the assessment criteria and level descriptors, please refer to Paper 1 (Case Studies) Level Descriptors in Appendix A.

4.3.2 PAPER 2 (ESSAYS)

Candidates are required to show depth of knowledge and understanding of issues and concepts relevant to contemporary China in their answers. The answers should demonstrate the ability to analyse issues and developments, evaluate and synthesise perspectives on issues across content dimensions to inform the issues, and present analytical, focused and well-informed arguments and conclusions. Candidates are required to answer the essay questions in continuous prose.

The essays will be assessed using a generic levels of response mark scheme, which involves qualitative rather than quantitative evaluation. Judgements on the appropriate level of each essay assessed will be based on the principle of 'best fit' determined by the descriptors within each level which has several assessment criteria.

For details on the assessment criteria and level descriptors, please refer to Paper 2 (Essays) Level Descriptors in Appendix B.

5 SYLLABUS CONTENT

The syllabus is focused on studying developments in contemporary China from circa 2000 to the present day through an examination of four Key Issues across the content dimensions of China's economy, politics, society and international relations.

The four Key Issues are:

- China's Economic Development and Its Sustainability
- Governing China and Its Challenges
- Chinese Society and Its Transformation
- China's Foreign Policy and Its Implications

| Key Issue 1 CHINA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ITS SUSTAINABILITY | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| Overview | Connecting the Dimensions | | |
| Learning Outcomes | Content (Dimension: Economy) | | |
| Through the study of this issue, students will be able to discuss the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Features of China's economic development• Challenges to China's economic sustainability• Effectiveness of China's approaches to economic sustainability | Features of China's economic development: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• China's transition from centrally planned economy to socialist market economy• Drivers of economic growth<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Economic reforms– Trade and investment levels | Challenges to China's economic sustainability: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Structural issues<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Dependence on export-oriented industries– Inefficiency of state-owned enterprises (SOEs)– Banking debt• Regional and local disparities• Energy and environmental issues<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Dependence on fossil fuels– Environmental degradation | Effectiveness of China's approaches to economic sustainability: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic restructuring<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Increase in domestic consumption– Reform of SOEs– Expansion of technological and services sectors– Reform of banks• Developing poorer regions<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Infrastructural and industrial development– Urbanisation• Promoting green development<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Development of renewable energy– Environmental protection |
| Key Concepts | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic development• Economic growth• Economic sustainability• Economic liberalisation | | | |

| Key Issue 2 GOVERNING CHINA AND ITS CHALLENGES | |
|--|--|
| Overview | Connecting the Dimensions |
| Learning Outcome | Content (Dimension: Politics) |
| China's post-Maoist political system has remained stable due to its adaptability in responding to changing political, economic and social conditions. Political stability is derived from a combination of the party-state system's responsiveness to the people's socio-economic needs and its authoritarian features. There is growing awareness that for political stability to endure and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to remain relevant, political reforms within the party-state system such as anti-corruption and the rule of law must continue to deliver effective governance. In addition, the party-state system's capacity to deliver sustained economic development and respond to the needs of different social groups remains key to the maintenance of political stability. | To examine the stability of China's political system, there is a need to explore the impact of social and economic transformation on political stability. These changes will test the capacity of the party-state system to manage public needs, implement political, social and economic reforms, and deliver effective governance. The need to maintain political stability also shapes China's foreign policy in supporting domestic economic growth and addressing nationalist sentiments, which will in turn affect the continued relevance and stability of the party-state system. |
| Through the study of this issue, students will be able to discuss the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Features of China's political system• Challenges to China's political stability• Effectiveness of China's approaches to political stability | <p>Features of China's political system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party-state system • Ideological and performance-based sources of legitimacy • Central-local relations <p>Challenges to China's political stability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Corruption – Rule of law – Responsiveness to public needs – Ethnic minority issues • Governing capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bureaucratic capacity – Relationship between central and local governments • Political participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Political opposition – Online citizen activism |
| Key Concepts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Political stability• Governance• Political legitimacy• Ideology | <p>Effectiveness of China's approaches to political stability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Anti-corruption – Legal reforms – Delivery of services – Management of ethnic minority groups • Governing capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reform of party and state institutions – Management of central-local relations • Managing political participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – State-sponsored participation mechanisms – Surveillance and censorship |

| Key Issue 3 CHINESE SOCIETY AND ITS TRANSFORMATION | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| Overview | Connecting the Dimensions | | |
| Learning Outcomes | Content (Dimension: Society) | | |
| Through the study of this issue, students will be able to discuss the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aspects of China's social change• Challenges of China's social change• Effectiveness of China's approaches to manage social change | Aspects of China's social change: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demographic changes<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Declining birth rate– Increase in life expectancy• Urbanisation and rural-urban migration• Changes in social structure<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Increased social stratification– Changes in family structure | Challenges of China's social change: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demographic issues<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Impact of population policies– Ageing population• Social mobility issues<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Income and regional disparities– Social inequalities• Growing civil society<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)– Social movements• Diverse social values and beliefs<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Religious revival– Impact of media on traditional values | Effectiveness of China's approaches to manage social change: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reform of social governance<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Changes in population policies– Provision of social security, social assistance and social welfare– Household registration system (<i>hukou</i>)– Management of NGOs• Managing social order<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Use of ideology– Regulation of religious organisations– Management of media |
| Key Concepts | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social change• Social stability• Social governance• Civil society | | | |

| Key Issue 4 CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Overview | Connecting the Dimensions | | |
| Learning Outcomes | Content (Dimension: International Relations) | | |
| Through the study of this issue, students will be able to discuss the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors shaping China's foreign policy • China's bilateral relations with the US, Japan and ASEAN, and their implications for China's national interests • China's role in global governance and its implications for China's global influence | <p>Factors shaping China's foreign policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National interests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sovereignty and territorial integrity – Security interests – Economic interests • Ideology | <p>China's bilateral relations and their implications for China's national interests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China-US relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bilateral trade and investments – Geopolitical issues • China-Japan relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bilateral trade and investments – Security issues • China's relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Regional economic cooperation – Regional security issues | <p>China's role in global governance and its implications for China's global influence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – International economic institutions – Multilateral trade arrangements • International security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Regional security cooperation – United Nations (UN) • Environment and climate change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participation in international environmental cooperation – Participation in international climate change cooperation |
| <p>Key Concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sovereignty • Security • Conflict • Cooperation | | | |

6 APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – PAPER 1 (CASE STUDIES) LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Section A – Case Study 1

Q1(a) = 6 marks

| Level | Marks | Level descriptors |
|---------|-------|--|
| Level 3 | 5–6 | Response explains two factors/issues in context. |
| Level 2 | 3–4 | Response explains one factor/issue in context. |
| Level 1 | 1–2 | Response describes one or more factor/issue. |
| Level 0 | 0 | No creditable response. |

Q1(b) = 9 marks

| Level | Marks | Level descriptors |
|---------|-------|--|
| Level 3 | 7–9 | Response analyses how far the sources are similar and different, supported by source content and contextual knowledge. |
| Level 2 | 4–6 | Response explains how the sources are similar or different, supported by source content and/or contextual knowledge. |
| Level 1 | 1–3 | Response describes, paraphrases or directly quotes from the source(s) without any comparative comments. |
| Level 0 | 0 | No creditable response. |

Q1(c) = 8 marks

| Level | Marks | Level descriptors |
|---------|-------|---|
| Level 3 | 6–8 | Response assesses the strengths and limitations of the source in relation to the question, using contextual knowledge and/or other source(s). |
| Level 2 | 3–5 | Response explains the strengths and/or limitations of the source in relation to the question, using source content and provenance. |
| Level 1 | 1–2 | Response accepts the source at face value or describes the content in relation to the question. |
| Level 0 | 0 | No creditable response. |

Q1(d) = 12 marks

| Level | Marks | Level descriptors |
|---------|-------|--|
| Level 3 | 9–12 | Response evaluates all the sources and uses contextual knowledge to reach a supported judgement about the degree to which the sources support the given view. Towards the bottom of the level, responses may be less well-developed. |
| Level 2 | 5–8 | Response evaluates the sources in relation to the question. There may be attempts to use contextual knowledge for source evaluation but the quality of evaluation may be uneven. |
| Level 1 | 1–4 | Response describes the content of the sources in relation to the question. |
| Level 0 | 0 | No creditable response. |

Section B – Case Study 2

Q2 = 25 marks

| Level | Marks | Level descriptors |
|---------|-------|--|
| Level 5 | 21–25 | Response thoroughly evaluates the issue, using all the sources and contextual knowledge, makes recommendations and develops explanations about how and why these recommendations can result in improvements. Towards the top of the level, responses will provide a thorough evaluation of the issue and a detailed assessment of the likelihood of success of the recommendations. Towards the bottom of the level, the link between the recommendations and the evaluation of the issue may be implicit. |
| Level 4 | 16–20 | Response evaluates the issue, using the sources and contextual knowledge, and makes recommendations. Towards the top of the level, recommendations will be more fully developed. Towards the bottom of the level, the quality of evaluation of the issue may be uneven, and recommendations will not be fully developed. |
| Level 3 | 11–15 | Response makes a limited evaluation of the issue, using the sources and contextual knowledge. Towards the top of the level, recommendations will be made but may be undeveloped. Towards the bottom of the level, there will be no recommendations. |
| Level 2 | 6–10 | Response explains the issue, using the sources or contextual knowledge. |
| Level 1 | 1–5 | Response describes the issue, using the sources or contextual knowledge. |
| Level 0 | 0 | No creditable response. |

APPENDIX B – PAPER 2 (ESSAYS) LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

| Level | Marks | Level descriptors |
|--------------|--------------|--|
| Level 5 | 25–30 | <p>Responses are consistently analytical and clearly focused on the demands of the question. They show a thorough understanding of the issues in the question. The argument is balanced and well-supported by relevant factual material. The response is coherent and convincing, well-structured and fully developed. A clearly supported judgement about the question is reached, showing synthesis of different perspectives. Relevant dimensions will be considered in a sustained manner.</p> <p>Towards the top of the level, responses are expected to be analytical, focused and coherent throughout with critical evaluation of different perspectives and a clear judgement in response to the question. Towards the bottom of the level, responses might not show all of these characteristics in equal measure, but will still be well-argued.</p> |
| Level 4 | 19–24 | <p>Responses are analytical and largely focused on the demands of the question. They show a very good understanding of the issues in the question. The argument is largely balanced and supported with relevant factual material. The response is largely coherent and convincing, clearly structured and developed. A largely supported judgement about the question is reached, showing consideration of different perspectives. Relevant dimensions will be considered.</p> <p>Towards the top of the level, responses are expected to be analytical, focused and coherent, and to consider a range of perspectives critically. Judgements are largely supported. Towards the bottom of the level, the argument might be less convincing or less well-supported.</p> |
| Level 3 | 13–18 | <p>Responses are often analytical and have a degree of focus on the demands of the question. They show a good understanding of the issues in the question. The argument may be unbalanced and supported with some factual material. The response may be unevenly developed and lack some coherence. There will be some kind of judgement with some support, showing some consideration of different perspectives. There may be some consideration of relevant dimensions.</p> <p>Towards the top of the level, responses contain relevant factual material. They are likely to be largely analytical and focused. There will be some recognition that there is a range of different perspectives. Judgements will be attempted. Towards the bottom of the level, the argument may be less coherent and there may be some description rather than analysis of the perspectives.</p> |
| Level 2 | 7–12 | <p>Responses may have some analysis and may be aimed at the demands of the question. They show some understanding of the issues in the question. The argument may be undeveloped and supported with limited factual material. The response may lack clarity and coherence. The response describes different perspectives, and the judgements may be assertions with insufficient support. Relevant dimensions may not be considered.</p> <p>Towards the top of the level, responses are likely to have a degree of analysis and to address the question directly. Towards the bottom of the level, responses are likely to show limited understanding of the issues in the question and to lack development.</p> |
| Level 1 | 1–6 | <p>Responses will not be focused on the demands of the question. They will not show understanding of the issues in the question. The argument may be disjointed and lack clarity, with irrelevant factual material. The response may be brief or in note form. The response describes some perspectives and does not reach a judgement. Relevant dimensions are not considered.</p> <p>Towards the top of the level, responses may make a few valid points. Towards the bottom of the level, responses will fulfil very few of the demands of the question.</p> |
| Level 0 | 0 | No creditable response. |