

CAMBRIDGE IGCSE

Chinese as a Second Language 0523

Assessment Overview

Examinations 2028 and 2029

How the qualification is assessed

The table shows the papers and components described for this syllabus. All candidates take the required components described below. A component's raw mark is the total available on that assessment; its weighting is the share of the qualification result, which may differ from its share of raw marks.

Paper or component	Duration	Raw marks	Weighting	Question or task structure
1: Reading and Writing	2 h	60	60%	Five compulsory exercises
2: Listening	Approx. 35-45 min	30	20%	Four listening exercises
3: Speaking	Approx. 10-13 min	60	20%	Presentation, topic discussion and general conversation

Read the weighting against your qualification route. A longer paper or a larger raw-mark total does not automatically mean a greater final weighting. Prepare for every component that applies to you, including practical, oral or coursework requirements where specified.

What each component requires

All candidates complete three components.

Paper 1 assesses Reading and Writing. It lasts two hours, carries 60 marks and contributes 60 per cent of the qualification. Its five compulsory exercises include information transfer, short-answer comprehension, multiple matching, functional writing of approximately 100 to 120 characters, and extended writing of approximately 250 to 300 characters.

Paper 2 assesses Listening. It lasts approximately 35 to 45 minutes, carries 30 marks and contributes 20 per cent. You complete four exercises involving short answers, gap filling, information correction and multiple-choice questions. The recordings include short and extended spoken texts, and each is played twice.

Component 3 is the Speaking test. It lasts approximately 10 to 13 minutes, carries 60 marks and contributes the remaining 20 per cent. You give a two-to-three-minute presentation, discuss your chosen topic with the examiner, and then take part in a general conversation.

The Speaking test is conducted and assessed in Mandarin Chinese by the centre, recorded for every candidate and externally moderated by Cambridge.

Dictionaries are not permitted in any component. Final grades range from A star to G.

Preparing the right kind of response

In comprehension, locate the information that answers the exact question and distinguish a speaker's or writer's opinion from fact. In writing, address the requested audience, purpose and content before checking language accuracy. Where listening and speaking are assessed, familiarity with the prescribed format matters as much as rehearsed vocabulary.

The assessment objectives are visible in the response itself: relevant knowledge, appropriate use of the stimulus or task, a clear method or explanation, and a conclusion where requested. The command word and mark allocation help show the depth required. An answer should respond to the actual question, not reproduce a memorised passage that only partly fits.

Timing and examination arrangements

Begin preparation with accurate, untimed work, then move towards the duration and conditions of your required component. Use mark allocations to guide pacing while allowing time to read instructions and check the response. Any practice pacing advice is study guidance, not a new Cambridge time rule.

Examinations are available in the June series. Private candidates may enter, provided their approved centre can conduct and assess the Speaking test and submit the required recording and documentation to Cambridge.

An approved examination centre confirms entries, available component options, deadlines and any practical or speaking arrangements. Preparation-course access does not itself constitute an examination entry. Written answers may use traditional or simplified characters. Listening and speaking use Mandarin. Private candidates need a centre able to administer and submit the speaking assessment.

Key pointers: Know your required components, follow question choices precisely and practise the relevant response formats. **Next:** Open **Learning Resources** to see which materials support this preparation.