



**Cambridge Assessment
International Education**

Syllabus

Cambridge IGCSE™

First Language Chinese 0509

Use this syllabus for exams in 2026 and 2027.

Exams are available in the June series.



Version 1

For the purposes of screen readers, any mention in this document of Cambridge IGCSE refers to Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education.

**Cambridge
Pathway** 

Why choose Cambridge International?

Cambridge International prepares school students for life, helping them develop an informed curiosity and a lasting passion for learning. We are part of the University of Cambridge.

Our Cambridge Pathway gives students a clear path for educational success from age 5 to 19. Schools can shape the curriculum around how they want students to learn – with a wide range of subjects and flexible ways to offer them. It helps students discover new abilities and a wider world, and gives them the skills they need for life, so they can achieve at school, university and work.

Our programmes and qualifications set the global standard for international education. They are created by subject experts, are rooted in academic rigour and reflect the latest educational research. They provide a strong platform for learners to progress from one stage to the next, and are well supported by teaching and learning resources. Learn more about our research at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/

We believe education works best when curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment are closely aligned. Our programmes develop deep knowledge, conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking skills, to prepare students for their future. Together with schools, we develop Cambridge learners who are confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged – equipped for success in the modern world.

Every year, nearly a million Cambridge students from 10 000 schools in 160 countries prepare for their future with the Cambridge Pathway.

School feedback: ‘We think the Cambridge curriculum is superb preparation for university.’

Feedback from: Christoph Guttentag, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, Duke University, USA

Quality management



Cambridge International is committed to providing exceptional quality. In line with this commitment, our quality management system for the provision of international education programmes and qualifications for students aged 5 to 19 is independently certified as meeting the internationally recognised standard, ISO 9001:2015. Learn more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/about-us/our-standards/

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Important: Changes to this syllabus

The latest syllabus is version 1, published September 2023. There are no significant changes which affect teaching.

Any textbooks endorsed to support the syllabus for examination from 2020 are still suitable for use with this syllabus.

1 Why choose this syllabus?

Key benefits

Cambridge IGCSE is the world's most popular international qualification for 14 to 16 year olds, although it can be taken by students of other ages. It is tried, tested and trusted.

Students can choose from 70 subjects in any combination – it is taught by over 5000 schools in 150 countries.

Our programmes promote a thorough knowledge and understanding of a subject and help to develop the skills learners need for their next steps in education or employment.

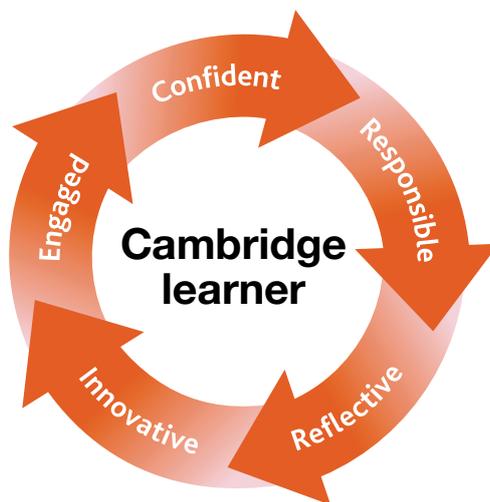
Cambridge IGCSE First Language Chinese is designed for learners whose mother tongue is Chinese. The course allows learners to:

- develop the ability to communicate clearly, accurately and effectively when writing
- learn how to use a wide range of vocabulary and correct grammar, character formation and punctuation
- develop a personal style and an awareness of the audience being addressed.

Learners are also encouraged to read widely, including classical texts, both for their own enjoyment and to further their awareness of the ways in which Chinese can be used. Cambridge IGCSE First Language Chinese also develops more general analysis and communication skills such as synthesis, inference and the ability to order facts and present opinions effectively.

Cambridge IGCSE First Language qualifications are accepted by universities and employers as proof of knowledge and understanding of a language.

Our approach encourages learners to be:



School feedback: ‘The strength of Cambridge IGCSE qualifications is internationally recognised and has provided an international pathway for our students to continue their studies around the world.’

Feedback from: Gary Tan, Head of Schools and CEO, Raffles Group of Schools, Indonesia

International recognition and acceptance

Our expertise in curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment is the basis for the recognition of our programmes and qualifications around the world. The combination of knowledge and skills in Cambridge IGCSE First Language Chinese gives learners a solid foundation for further study. Candidates who achieve grades A* to C are well prepared to follow a wide range of courses including Cambridge International AS & A Level Chinese.

Cambridge IGCSEs are accepted and valued by leading universities and employers around the world as evidence of academic achievement. Cambridge students can be confident that their qualifications will be understood and valued throughout their education and career, in their home country and internationally. Many universities require a combination of Cambridge International AS & A Levels and Cambridge IGCSEs or equivalent to meet their entry requirements.

UK ENIC, the national agency in the UK for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills, has carried out an independent benchmarking study of Cambridge IGCSE and found it to be comparable to the standard of the GCSE in the UK. This means students can be confident that their Cambridge IGCSE qualifications are accepted as equivalent to UK GCSEs by leading universities worldwide.

Learn more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition

School feedback: ‘Cambridge IGCSE is one of the most sought-after and recognised qualifications in the world. It is very popular in Egypt because it provides the perfect preparation for success at advanced level programmes.’

Feedback from: Managing Director of British School of Egypt BSE

Supporting teachers

We believe education is most effective when curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment are closely aligned. We provide a wide range of resources, detailed guidance, innovative training and targeted professional development so that you can give your students the best possible preparation for Cambridge IGCSE. To find out which resources are available for each syllabus go to our School Support Hub.

The School Support Hub is our secure online site for Cambridge teachers where you can find the resources you need to deliver our programmes. You can also keep up to date with your subject and the global Cambridge community through our online discussion forums.

Find out more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/support

Support for Cambridge IGCSE			
Planning and preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabuses • Schemes of work • Specimen Question Papers and Mark Schemes • Learner guides 	Teaching and assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorsed resources • Online forums 	Learning and revision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example candidate responses • Past papers and mark schemes • Specimen paper answers 	Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate Results Service • Principal examiner reports for teachers • Results Analysis

Sign up for email notifications about changes to syllabuses, including new and revised products and services, at www.cambridgeinternational.org/syllabusupdates

Syllabuses and specimen materials represent the final authority on the content and structure of all of our assessments.

Professional development

Find the next step on your professional development journey.

- Introductory Professional Development – An introduction to Cambridge programmes and qualifications.
- Extension Professional Development – Develop your understanding of Cambridge programmes and qualifications to build confidence in your delivery.
- Enrichment Professional Development – Transform your approach to teaching with our Enrichment workshops.
- Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications (PDQs) – Practice-based programmes that transform professional learning for practising teachers. Available at Certificate and Diploma level.

Find out more at:

www.cambridgeinternational.org/support-and-training-for-schools/professional-development/



Supporting exams officers

We provide comprehensive support and guidance for all Cambridge exams officers.

Find out more at: www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

2 Syllabus overview

Aims

The aims describe the purposes of a course based on this syllabus.

The aims are to enable students to:

- read a wide range of texts, fluently and with good understanding, enjoying and appreciating a variety of language
- read critically and use knowledge gained from wide reading to inform and improve their own writing
- write accurately and effectively, using appropriate standard language
- work with information and with ideas in Chinese by developing skills of critical evaluation, analysis, synthesis and inference
- acquire and apply a wide vocabulary, alongside a knowledge and understanding of grammatical terminology and linguistic conventions
- deepen understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture and classical texts.



Cambridge Assessment International Education is an education organisation and politically neutral. The contents of this syllabus, examination papers and associated materials do not endorse any political view. We endeavour to treat all aspects of the exam process neutrally.

Content overview

Cambridge IGCSE First Language Chinese offers candidates the opportunity to respond knowledgeably to a range of reading passages. Candidates will use some of these passages to inform and inspire their own writing and write in a range of text types for different audiences.

The passages cover a range of genres and types, including fiction and non-fiction, and may also include other forms of writing, such as essays, reviews and articles.

Learners will have the opportunity to read Classical Chinese prose texts to help to deepen their knowledge of Chinese culture.

We encourage learners to become appreciative and critical readers and writers of Chinese.

Assessment overview

All candidates take two components. Candidates will be eligible for grades A* to G.

All candidates take:	and:
<p>Paper 1 2 hours 15 minutes</p> <p>Reading, Directed Writing and 50% Classical Chinese</p> <p>60 marks</p> <p>Structured and extended writing questions</p> <p>Questions are based on four reading texts</p> <p>Externally assessed</p>	<p>Paper 2 2 hours</p> <p>Writing 50%</p> <p>50 marks</p> <p>Composition tasks</p> <p>Externally assessed</p>

Information on availability is in the **Before you start** section.

Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives (AOs) are:

AO1 Reading

Candidates will be assessed on their ability to:

- R1 identify and interpret explicit information and attitudes
- R2 identify and interpret implicit information and attitudes
- R3 demonstrate understanding of how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers
- R4 analyse and evaluate facts, ideas and opinions
- R5 select information for specific purposes.

AO2 Writing

Candidates will be assessed on their ability to:

- W1 communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively
- W2 synthesise information, sequence facts and develop ideas and opinions
- W3 use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- W4 use tone, style and register appropriate to audience and context
- W5 write characters correctly and make accurate use of characters, punctuation and grammar.

Weighting for assessment objectives

The approximate weightings allocated to each of the assessment objectives (AOs) are summarised below.

Assessment objectives as a percentage of the qualification

Assessment objective	Weighting in IGCSE %
AO1 Reading	40
AO2 Writing	60
Total	100

Assessment objectives as a percentage of each component

Assessment objective	Weighting in components %	
	Paper 1	Paper 2
AO1 Reading	83.5	0
AO2 Writing	16.5	100
Total	100	100

3 Subject content

This syllabus gives you the flexibility to design a course that will interest, challenge and engage your learners. Where appropriate you are responsible for selecting resources and examples to support your learners' study. These should be appropriate for the learners' age, cultural background and learning context as well as complying with your school policies and local legal requirements.

In preparation for assessment, learners should engage with a range of genres and types of texts, including fiction and non-fiction, essays, reviews and articles, as well as Classical Chinese texts. This study should include focus on writers' use of language and style. For the contemporary texts, learners should also focus on the ways in which writers achieve effects and influence readers. Learners should study how influence may include facts, ideas, perspectives, opinions and bias.

As developing writers themselves, learners should be introduced to a range of skills. They should also learn to create a discursive/argumentative letter, article or essay and a descriptive or narrative composition.

The skills covered in the syllabus are outlined below for the different areas of language developed.

Assessment objective

AO1: Reading	Candidates should be able to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify and interpret explicit information and attitudes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings and viewpoints in modern and classical texts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify and interpret implicit information and attitudes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and viewpoints in modern and classical texts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate understanding of how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify and comment on specific ways in which writers use language, form and structure for effect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyse and evaluate facts, ideas and opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make relevant responses to facts, ideas and opinions in texts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> select information for specific purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accurately identify specific ideas, information and/or features in texts and develop them for a specified purpose

AO2: Writing

- communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively
- synthesise information, sequence facts and develop ideas and opinions
- use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- use tone, style and register appropriate to audience and context
- write characters correctly and make accurate use of characters, punctuation and grammar.
- produce clear and coherent texts that communicate effectively, sustaining the reader's interest
- synthesise information, structure text to make sequence and development of ideas clear to the reader
- choose vocabulary to create effects appropriate to purpose and audience
- use form and style suited to purpose and audience
- write in paragraphs using varied sentence structures, demonstrating control of syntax and grammar and using accurate character formation and punctuation.

4 Details of the assessment

The question papers are set entirely in Chinese.

Texts and questions are printed in both traditional and simplified characters on the question paper.

Candidates choose the form they prefer in the examination and may write their answers in either traditional or simplified characters.

For information on the assessment objectives (AOs), see Section 2.

Paper 1 – Reading and Directed Writing

Written paper, 2 hours 15 minutes, 60 marks

Candidates answer **all** the questions in three compulsory sections. Candidates write all their answers in the spaces provided on the question paper. Dictionaries may **not** be used.

The passages will be printed in the question paper insert.

Section 1

Comprehension and Use of Language (23 marks)

Candidates respond to a series of questions and sub-questions based on Passage 1, a fiction text. There will be comprehension questions testing understanding of both explicit and implicit meaning worth 14 marks. Candidates also respond to sub-questions which include short answers worth 9 marks which relate to figurative language, the author's use of language and structure and the effect these have.

Passage 1 will be approximately 1000 characters long and will be from either the twentieth or the twenty-first century.

This section assesses the following reading assessment objectives:

- R1 identify and interpret explicit information and attitudes
- R2 identify and interpret implicit information and attitudes
- R3 demonstrate understanding of how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers.

Section 2

Directed Writing (25 marks)

Candidates answer **one** compulsory question on two thematically linked non-fiction passages – Passage 2 and Passage 3.

Candidates use and evaluate the information in the two passages to create an argumentative/discursive response.

Using their own words, candidates write about 250–350 characters. This exercise is about demonstrating understanding of the ideas in the reading texts. Candidates can develop their ideas but they should not bring their own ideas from outside the text.

Responses will be awarded up to 15 marks for content and up to 10 marks for quality of writing.

Passage 2 and Passage 3 will have a combined total of up to 600 characters and will be from either the twentieth or the twenty-first century, or both, and will be thematically linked.

This section assesses the following writing assessment objectives:

- W1 communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively
- W2 synthesise information, sequence facts and develop ideas and opinions
- W3 use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- W4 use tone, style and register appropriate to audience and context
- W5 write characters correctly and make accurate use of characters, punctuation and grammar

This question also assesses the following reading assessment objectives:

- R4 analyse and evaluate facts, ideas and opinions
- R5 select information for specific purposes.

Section 3

Classical Chinese (12 marks)

Candidates answer a series of questions about Passage 4, a previously unseen passage of Classical Chinese text. The passage will be taken from a short story or essay from the Ming dynasty and will be approximately 200 characters in length.

The questions may include short-answer and multiple choice and will assess reading skills only. There will not be a requirement to write in Classical Chinese.

Candidates will be asked to focus on the language of the passage and their understanding of it. This means that prior knowledge of the text or contextual information such as historical or social knowledge will not be needed.

In preparation for the examination, candidates should have studied a range of Classical Chinese texts from this time period in order to be familiar with the language used.

This section assesses the following reading assessment objectives:

- R1 identify and interpret explicit information and attitudes
- R2 identify and interpret implicit information and attitudes

Paper 2 – Writing

Written paper, 2 hours, 50 marks

Candidates answer **two** questions, one from each section.

Candidates write all their answers in the spaces provided on the question paper. Dictionaries may **not** be used.

Section 1 Argumentative/Discursive Writing (25 marks)

Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of four titles: two argumentative and two discursive.

Candidates use the title to develop and write a composition.

Candidates are advised to write about 400–600 characters.

Argumentative:

An argumentative piece of writing attempts to clearly present a strong position on a particular topic. Its purpose is to both educate and persuade the reader on a particular point of view. It may target an audience that is more resistant to its viewpoint or message.

Discursive:

A discursive piece of writing presents a balanced and objective examination of a subject. It does not, however, have to be expressly neutral. The response should present both sides of the discussion.

Section B Descriptive/Narrative Writing (25 marks)

Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of four titles: two descriptive and two narrative.

Candidates use the title to develop and write a composition.

Candidates are advised to write about 400–600 characters.

Descriptive:

A descriptive piece of writing describes a person, place or situation, painting a picture with words so that the reader can picture it in his/her mind.

Narrative:

A narrative piece of writing tells a story containing a sequence of connected events which may be real or imaginary.

This paper tests the following writing assessment objectives (50 marks):

W1 communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively

W2 synthesise information, sequence facts and develop ideas and opinions

W3 use a range of appropriate vocabulary

W4 use tone, style and register appropriate to audience and context

W5 write characters correctly and make accurate use of characters, punctuation and grammar.

5 What else you need to know

This section is an overview of other information you need to know about this syllabus. It will help to share the administrative information with your exams officer so they know when you will need their support. Find more information about our administrative processes at www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

Before you start

Previous study

We recommend that learners starting this course should have a level in Chinese equivalent to first language competence.

Guided learning hours

We design Cambridge IGCSE syllabuses to require about 130 guided learning hours for each subject. This is for guidance only. The number of hours a learner needs to achieve the qualification may vary according to each school and the learners' previous experience of the subject.

Availability and timetables

All Cambridge schools are allocated to one of six administrative zones. Each zone has a specific timetable. Find your administrative zone at www.cambridgeinternational.org/adminzone.

You can view the timetable for your administrative zone at www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables

You can enter candidates in the June exam series.

Check you are using the syllabus for the year the candidate is taking the exam.

Private candidates can enter for this syllabus. For more information, please refer to the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*.

Combining with other syllabuses

Candidates can take this syllabus alongside other Cambridge International syllabuses in a single exam series. The only exceptions are:

- Cambridge IGCSE Chinese as a Second Language (0523)
- Cambridge IGCSE Mandarin Chinese (0547)
- syllabuses with the same title at the same level.

Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) and Cambridge O Level syllabuses are at the same level.

Group awards: Cambridge ICE

Cambridge ICE (International Certificate of Education) is a group award for Cambridge IGCSE. It encourages schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum by recognising the achievements of learners who pass exams in a range of different subjects.

Learn more about Cambridge ICE at www.cambridgeinternational.org/cambridgeice

Making entries

Exams officers are responsible for submitting entries to Cambridge International. We encourage them to work closely with you to make sure they enter the right number of candidates for the right combination of syllabus components. Entry option codes and instructions for submitting entries are in the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*. Your exams officer has access to this guide.

Exam administration

To keep our exams secure, we produce question papers for different areas of the world, known as administrative zones. We allocate all Cambridge schools to an administrative zone determined by their location. Each zone has a specific timetable.

Some of our syllabuses offer candidates different assessment options. An entry option code is used to identify the components the candidate will take relevant to the administrative zone and the available assessment options.

Support for exams officers

We know how important exams officers are to the successful running of exams. We provide them with the support they need to make entries on time. Your exams officer will find this support, and guidance for all other phases of the Cambridge Exams Cycle, at www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

Retakes

Candidates can retake the whole qualification as many times as they want to. Information on retake entries is at www.cambridgeinternational.org/retakes

Language

This syllabus is available in English and Chinese. The assessment materials are in Chinese only.

Accessibility and equality

Syllabus and assessment design

At Cambridge International, we work to avoid direct or indirect discrimination in our syllabuses and assessment materials. We aim to maximise inclusivity for candidates of all national, cultural or social backgrounds and candidates with protected characteristics, which include special educational needs and disability, religion and belief, and characteristics related to gender and identity. We also aim to make our materials as accessible as possible by using accessible language and applying accessible design principles. This gives all candidates the fairest possible opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding and helps to minimise the requirement to make reasonable adjustments during the assessment process.

Access arrangements

Access arrangements (including modified papers) are the principal way in which Cambridge International complies with our duty, as guided by the UK Equality Act (2010), to make 'reasonable adjustments' for candidates with special educational needs (SEN), disability, illness or injury. Where a candidate would otherwise be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a candidate with no SEN, disability, illness or injury, we may be able to agree pre-examination access arrangements. These arrangements help a candidate by minimising accessibility barriers and maximising their opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding in an assessment.

Important:

Requested access arrangements should be based on evidence of the candidate's barrier to assessment and should also reflect their normal way of working at school. This is explained in the *Cambridge Handbook* www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

- For Cambridge International to approve an access arrangement, we will need to agree that it constitutes a reasonable adjustment, involves reasonable cost and timeframe and does not affect the security and integrity of the assessment.
- Availability of access arrangements should be checked by centres at the start of the course. Details of our standard access arrangements and modified question papers are available in the *Cambridge Handbook* www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide
- Please contact us at the start of the course to find out if we are able to approve an arrangement that is not included in the list of standard access arrangements.
- Candidates who cannot access parts of the assessment may be able to receive an award based on the parts they have completed.

Some access arrangements are not allowed in this syllabus because they affect the assessment objectives:

- candidates must **not** use voice-activated software to dictate their written work
- candidates must **not** use word processing technology which uses word prediction and/or phrase prompting including spell check and grammar check
- candidates must **not** use human readers.

Please note that we cannot provide Braille papers for this syllabus. We can only provide Braille papers for languages which use the Roman alphabet.

After the exam

Grading and reporting

Grades A*, A, B, C, D, E, F or G indicate the standard a candidate achieved at Cambridge IGCSE.

A* is the highest and G is the lowest. 'Ungraded' means that the candidate's performance did not meet the standard required for grade G. 'Ungraded' is reported on the statement of results but not on the certificate.

In specific circumstances your candidates may see one of the following letters on their statement of results:

- Q (PENDING)
- X (NO RESULT).

These letters do not appear on the certificate.

On the statement of results and certificates, Cambridge IGCSE is shown as INTERNATIONAL GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION (IGCSE).

How students and teachers can use the grades

Assessment at Cambridge IGCSE has two purposes:

- 1 to measure learning and achievement

The assessment confirms achievement and performance in relation to the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the syllabus.

- 2 to show likely future success

The outcomes help predict which students are well prepared for a particular course or career and/or which students are more likely to be successful.

The outcomes help students choose the most suitable course or career.

Changes to this syllabus for 2026 and 2027

The syllabus has been updated. This is version 1, published September 2023.

You must read the whole syllabus before planning your teaching programme. We review our syllabuses regularly to make sure they continue to meet the needs of our schools. In updating this syllabus, we have made it easier for teachers and students to understand, keeping the familiar features that teachers and schools value.

Any textbooks endorsed to support the syllabus for examination from 2020 are still suitable for use with this syllabus.



School feedback: ‘While studying Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge International A Levels, students broaden their horizons through a global perspective and develop a lasting passion for learning.’

Feedback from: Zhai Xiaoning, Deputy Principal, The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China

We are committed to making our documents accessible in accordance with the WCAG 2.1 Standard. We are always looking to improve the accessibility of our documents. If you find any problems or you think we are not meeting accessibility requirements, contact us at **info@cambridgeinternational.org** with the subject heading: Digital accessibility. If you need this document in a different format, contact us and supply your name, email address and requirements and we will respond within 15 working days.

Cambridge Assessment International Education, The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
t: +44 (0)1223 553554 email: info@cambridgeinternational.org www.cambridgeinternational.org