

# SYLLABUS

**Cambridge International Level 3  
Pre-U Certificate in  
Mandarin Chinese (Principal)**

**9778**

For examination in 2019, 2020 and 2021

This syllabus is regulated for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland as a Cambridge International Level 3 Pre-U Certificate. QN: 500/4738/3

## Changes to the syllabus for 2019, 2020 and 2021

The syllabus has been updated. The latest syllabus is version 3, published November 2017.

The information on page 13 regarding the provision of forms and instructions relating to Paper 1 Speaking has been updated.

### **Previous changes to version 2 of the syllabus published September 2016**

Page 16, the name of the translator of *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* 'Joes' has been corrected to 'Jones'

### **Previous changes to version 1 of the syllabus published September 2016**

Page 11, topic area 6 has been updated to Equality of opportunity.

Page 16, the set works for Paper 4, Section 2 Chinese literature and film have been updated.

### **TQT**

We have added guidance on Total Qualification Time value (TQT). TQT includes both guided learning hours and independent learning activities. The number of hours required to gain the qualification may vary according to local curricular practice and the learners' prior experience of the subject.

**| Significant changes to the syllabus are indicated by black vertical lines either side of the text. |**

**You are strongly advised to read the whole syllabus before planning your teaching programme.**

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## Introduction

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### Why choose Cambridge Pre-U?

Cambridge Pre-U is designed to equip learners with the skills required to make a success of their studies at university. Schools can choose from a wide range of subjects.

Cambridge Pre-U is built on a core set of educational aims to prepare learners for university admission, and also for success in higher education and beyond:

- to support independent and self-directed learning
- to encourage learners to think laterally, critically and creatively, and to acquire good problem-solving skills
- to promote comprehensive understanding of the subject through depth and rigour.

Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects are linear. A candidate must take all the components together at the end of the course in one examination series. Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects are assessed at the end of a two-year programme of study.

The Cambridge Pre-U nine-point grade set recognises the full range of learner ability.

### Why choose Cambridge Pre-U Mandarin Chinese?

- Cambridge Pre-U Mandarin Chinese equips those learning Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language with the skills to operate in a Chinese environment.
- The majority of Chinese communities speak and understand Mandarin (普通话 putonghua), the official language of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Therefore, this syllabus only requires knowledge of this language. In writing, simplified characters (简体字 jiantizi), again as prescribed in the PRC, are used. For romanisation, the standard pinyin system is adopted.
- The focus of the Listening, Reading and Writing papers is to test contemporary, vernacular Mandarin Chinese.
- Cambridge Pre-U Mandarin Chinese has been specifically designed to meet the needs of foreign language learners. A set of topic areas and, unusually for this level, a core vocabulary underpin the syllabus. In order only to assess candidates' ability to read/write Mandarin Chinese where those are the skills being tested, questions on listening and reading passages are written and answered in English.
- Candidates are encouraged to develop the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. These are supplemented by Chinese-specific skills: accurate identification of roman transliteration (拼音 pinyin), including tones, and the use of a radical-indexed Chinese dictionary.
- As well as allowing learners to develop their language skills, the syllabus fosters an awareness of Chinese culture and history.
- Cambridge Pre-U Mandarin Chinese provides a stepping stone for university courses in Chinese and Chinese Studies, allowing universities to offer successful Cambridge Pre-U candidates alternative courses to the prevailing *ab initio* classes.

## Prior learning

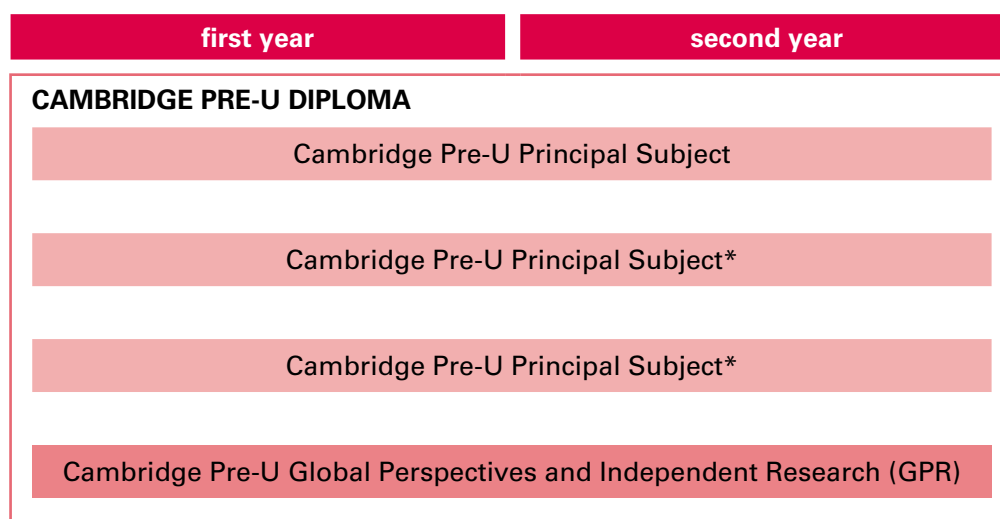
Cambridge Pre-U builds on the knowledge, understanding and skills gained by learners achieving a good pass in Level 1/Level 2 qualifications.

## Progression

In addition to providing a secure foundation for study in higher education, Cambridge Pre-U Mandarin Chinese equips learners with a range of skills for careers in business, education and the arts.

## Cambridge Pre-U Diploma

If learners choose, they can combine Cambridge Pre-U qualifications to achieve the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma; this comprises three Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects\* together with Global Perspectives and Independent Research (GPR). The Cambridge Pre-U Diploma, therefore, provides the opportunity for interdisciplinary study informed by an international perspective and includes an independent research project.



\* Up to two A Levels, Scottish Advanced Highers or IB Diploma programme courses at higher level can be substituted for Principal Subjects.

Learn more about the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma at [www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu](http://www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu)

## Support

Cambridge provides a wide range of support for Pre-U syllabuses, which includes recommended resource lists, Teacher Guides and Example Candidate Response booklets. Teachers can access these support materials at Teacher Support <https://teachers.cie.org.uk>

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## Syllabus aims

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The aims of the syllabus, listed below, are the same for all candidates and are to:

- develop the ability to understand Mandarin Chinese
- enable the candidate to communicate confidently and clearly in Mandarin Chinese
- form a sound base of skills, language and attitudes required for further study, work and leisure
- develop insights into the culture and civilisation of countries where Chinese is spoken
- encourage positive attitudes to language learning and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations
- further intellectual and personal development by promoting learning and social skills.

## Scheme of assessment

For Cambridge Pre-U Mandarin Chinese, candidates take all four components.

Component		Weighting
<b>Paper 1 Speaking</b>	<b>approx. 15 minutes</b>	20%
Speaking test, externally assessed by a visiting examiner, 60 marks		
<b>Paper 2 Listening, Reading and Translation</b>	<b>2 hours 30 minutes</b>	30%
Written paper, externally assessed, 60 marks		
<b>Paper 3 Writing and Usage</b>	<b>2 hours</b>	25%
Written paper, externally assessed, 60 marks		
<b>Paper 4 Chinese Culture</b>	<b>2 hours 30 minutes</b>	25%
Written paper, externally assessed, 60 marks		

### Availability

This syllabus is examined in the June examination series.

This syllabus is not available to private candidates.

### Combining this with other syllabuses

Candidates can combine this syllabus in a series with any other Cambridge syllabus, except syllabuses with the same title at the same level.

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## Assessment objectives

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<b>A01</b>	Understand and respond to texts written in the target language and to spoken material.
<b>A02</b>	Manipulate the target language accurately in spoken and written forms to demonstrate a capacity to choose appropriate examples of lexis and structures.
<b>A03</b>	Select information and present it in the target language and in English, organising arguments and ideas logically.
<b>A04</b>	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of aspects of Chinese society.



## Relationship between scheme of assessment and 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 Pre-U %
A01	33
A02	32
A03	12
A04	23

### Assessment objectives as a percentage of each component

Assessment objective	Weighting in components %			
	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
A01	17	100	0	0
A02	67	0	75	0
A03	8	0	25	17
A04	8	0	0	83

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## Grading and reporting

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Cambridge International Level 3 Pre-U Certificates (Principal Subjects and Global Perspectives Short Course) are qualifications in their own right. Cambridge Pre-U reports achievement on a scale of nine grades: Distinction 1, Distinction 2, Distinction 3, Merit 1, Merit 2, Merit 3, Pass 1, Pass 2 and Pass 3.

Cambridge Pre-U band	Cambridge Pre-U grade
Distinction	1
	2
	3
Merit	1
	2
	3
Pass	1
	2
	3

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## Grade descriptions

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Grade descriptions are provided to give an indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been shown by candidates awarded particular grades. Weakness in one aspect of the examination may be balanced by a better performance in some other aspect.

The following grade descriptions indicate the level of attainment characteristic of the middle of the given grade band.

### **Distinction (D2)**

Very good level of understanding and/or knowledge, expressed in well argued responses with relevant illustration; high level of accuracy, wide range of vocabulary and complex sentence patterns; a sense of idiom; very good pronunciation and intonation.

### **Merit (M2)**

Good level of understanding and/or knowledge; responses showing some ability to develop argument with appropriate illustration; generally accurate in simple structures but variable success in more complex language; adequate vocabulary and pronunciation.

### **Pass (P2)**

Uneven and/or basic responses showing some level of understanding and/or knowledge, expressed with limited argument and illustration; gaps in grammatical awareness; simple and repetitive sentence patterns and vocabulary; many sounds mispronounced.

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## Core vocabulary

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A list of core vocabulary is available from Cambridge Teacher Support (<https://teachers.cie.org.uk>). Candidates may expect to encounter unfamiliar vocabulary in the examination, but only items in the list will be tested.

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## Topic areas

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All textual material used in Papers 2 and 3 will be drawn from the topic areas set out below. The main purpose of this list is to provide a manageable content which offers flexibility to teachers in the planning of their courses but places restrictions on the topic areas from which examiners may make their choice of material. These topic areas are intended to help candidates and not limit them, and where the subject matter is the personal choice of candidates, for example the Prepared Topic in the Speaking test (Paper 1), they may choose topics of personal interest even if they lie outside the following list.

- 1 Family**
- 2 Young people**
- 3 Education**
- 4 The media**
- 5 Work and leisure**
- 6 Equality of opportunity**

Please note: Topics 1, 2 and 3 will remain constant from year to year.  
Topics 4, 5 and 6 will be reviewed for first examination in 2022.

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## Prescribed dictionary

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Each candidate will be expected to have a Chinese/English dictionary, details as follows, for use during the examination (Papers 2 and 3):

- Pocket Oxford Chinese Dictionary (English–Chinese Chinese–English), ISBN number 978-0198005940.

This is to be provided by the Centre and should not contain any candidate annotation or underlining.

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## Description of components

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### Paper 1 Speaking

Speaking test, 12–15 minutes, 60 marks

The Speaking test is conducted and assessed by a visiting examiner, appointed by Cambridge.

The Cambridge Handbook contains full instructions on the administration of the Speaking test. The Handbook can be found at [www.cie.org.uk](http://www.cie.org.uk)

#### Section 1 Prepared topic and topic conversation, 5–7 minutes, 30 marks

- Candidates will research a topic related to the history, current affairs or culture (including art, cinema, literature and traditions) of the Chinese world. They will identify the area of their prepared topic and submit this to Cambridge two weeks before the Speaking test, on the form provided. In the examination the candidate will be allowed to speak in Mandarin Chinese on this topic for about 2 minutes. The examiner will follow up this initial presentation with questions in Mandarin Chinese on the chosen topic. Candidates will be assessed on the content of their presentation (ability to present relevant facts, express opinions and put forward points for discussion) as well as their linguistic competence (comprehension and responsiveness, fluency, accuracy of tones, pronunciation, range of vocabulary, variety of sentence structures). Candidates may prepare a 'cue card' (not more than postcard size; maximum number of characters/pinyin syllables = 50) in the language to remind them of the main points they wish to make, to bring into the examination room. A script of their presentation is not allowed.

#### Section 2 General conversation, 6–8 minutes, 15 marks

- This section will begin with straightforward questions about the candidate's background and interests and move quickly on to a more mature conversation covering the topic areas listed on page 11. It is expected that the general conversation section will cover two or three of the topic areas, but it may cover more if the examiner has difficulty finding something the candidate is interested in or can talk about. At least one topic covered will be taken from topic areas 4, 5, and 6. The subject matter covered in the prepared topic will not be covered in the general conversation. Candidates will be assessed on linguistic competence (comprehension and responsiveness, fluency, accuracy of tones, pronunciation, range of vocabulary and variety of sentence structures).

15 marks will be available for the prepared topic, 15 marks for the topic conversation, 15 marks for the general conversation and 15 marks to be awarded globally for pronunciation/intonation and feel for the language.

Dictionaries are not allowed.

## Paper 2 Listening, Reading and Translation

Written paper, 2 hours 30 minutes, 60 marks

### Section 1 Listening, 30 minutes, 20 marks

- Candidates will have control of their own individual listening equipment.
  - Identification of tones and pinyin: candidates will listen to three recorded words, which they will have to write down using the correct pinyin romanisation and tones. **3 marks**
  - Two short pieces in Mandarin Chinese: questions will be objective, using a mixture of English and visuals. **3 marks**
  - Two longer pieces (275–300 characters in total): one piece will be tested through comprehension questions in English, which candidates will answer in English; for the other piece, candidates will be expected to provide a gist summary in English using bullet points for guidance. **14 marks**

### Section 2 Reading, 45 minutes, 18 marks

- Two passages in Chinese will be set, of around 450 characters in total. These will be tested by questions in English. There will be a mixture of objective questions and questions requiring written answers in English. Both passages will be in contemporary vernacular style, using grammatical structures as used in all popular textbooks.

### Section 3 Chinese sayings (Chengyu), 15 minutes, 6 marks

- Candidates will be given three Chengyu sayings (from a prescribed list of 25) to identify. A translation and an explanation of the saying in English must be provided by the candidate.

### Section 4 Translation, 60 minutes, 16 marks

- Candidates will translate a short passage of vernacular Chinese (not more than 200 characters) into English. The assessment will focus on the transfer of meaning rather than literal correctness.

Each candidate will be expected to have a Chinese/English dictionary, as prescribed by Cambridge, for use during the examination (see page 12). This will be provided by the Centre and should not contain any candidate annotation or underlining.



## Paper 3 Writing and Usage

Written paper, 2 hours, 60 marks

### Section 1 Radical and stroke order skills, 5 minutes, and use of grammar markers, aspect markers and measure words, 10 minutes, 10 marks

- Candidates will be asked to identify three characters by their radical. They will be asked to provide the number of strokes in the given characters. They will then be asked to provide the stroke order for the three characters in question.
- Candidates will be expected to complete a cloze test testing grammar markers, aspect markers and measure words.

### Section 2 Letter writing, 30 minutes, 20 marks

- Candidates will write a letter of 80–100 characters. The task will be in English but will require candidates to respond to a stimulus in Chinese. The assessment will focus on communication of the required elements, the accuracy of characters, accuracy of grammar and structures, and appropriateness of language. Candidates will be expected to use a formal register to open and close the letter.

### Section 3 Opinion essay, 1 hour 15 minutes, 30 marks

- There will be a choice of six titles, one on each of the six topic areas (see page 11). Titles will be provided in English and Chinese. Candidates will write one essay in Chinese with a recommended length of 175–225 characters. This part of the examination will be assessed for accuracy and linguistic range as well as development and organisation of ideas. Candidates should be encouraged to use conjunctions and more complex sentence structure. A colloquial style will be sufficient for top marks.

Each candidate will be expected to have a Chinese/English dictionary, as prescribed by Cambridge, for use during the examination (see page 12). This will be provided by the Centre and should not contain any candidate annotation or underlining.

## Paper 4 Chinese Culture

Written paper, 2 hours 30 minutes, 60 marks

Candidates must choose and prepare **one** option from Section 1 and **one** option from Section 2. In the examination, candidates will be required to answer **two** questions in English, **one** on each of their chosen options. The recommended length for each answer is 600–750 words. There will be a choice of two questions per option. This part of the examination will assess candidates' knowledge and understanding of their chosen cultural options and ability to use this knowledge to answer a question in a clear and focused manner.

### Section 1 Topics in Chinese culture, 30 marks

There will be three options for this section:

- **The founding of the People's Republic of China**
- **Chinese economic trends since 1978**
- **Emerging China: population, environment and migration**

### Section 2 Chinese literature and film, 30 marks

There will be three options for this section:

- **Fiction – *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*, Yu Hua (trans. Andrew Jones, First Anchor Books)**
- **Fiction – *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel of Shanghai*, Wang Anyi (trans. Michael Berry, Weatherhead Books on Asia)**
- **Film – *The Blue Kite*, Tian Zhuangzhuang**

Texts in Section 2 are to be read and studied in English.

There is no objection to any of these options being used for the Prepared Topic in the Speaking test (Paper 1).

The options will be reviewed for first examination in 2022.

## List of 成语 (Chengyu)

画蛇添足, huà shé tiān zú  
 狐假虎威, hú jiǎ hǔ wēi  
 盲人摸象, máng rén mō xiàng  
 坐井观天, zuò jǐng guān tiān  
 老马识途, lǎo mǎ shí tú  
 拔苗助长, bá miáo zhù zhǎng  
 对牛弹琴, duì niú tán qín  
 守株待兔, shǒu zhū dài tù  
 纸上谈兵, zhǐ shàng tán bīng  
 指鹿为马, zhǐ lù wéi mǎ  
 自相矛盾, zì xiāng máo dùn  
 以毒攻毒, yǐ dú gōng dú  
 入乡随俗, rù xiāng suí sú  
 一箭双雕, yī jiàn shuāng diāo  
 覆水难收, fù shuǐ nán shōu  
 唇亡齿寒, chún wáng chǐ hán  
 如鱼得水, rú yú dé shuǐ  
 青出于蓝, qīng chū yú lán  
 志同道合, zhì tóng dào hé  
 亡羊补牢, wáng yáng bǔ láo  
 饮水思源, yǐn shuǐ sī yuán  
 胸有成竹, xiōng yǒu chéng zhú  
 掩耳盗铃, yǎn ěr dào líng  
 打草惊蛇, dǎ cǎo jīng shé  
 四海为家, sì hǎi wéi jiā

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## Additional information

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### Equality and inclusion

This syllabus complies with our *Code of Practice* and *Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition*.

Cambridge has taken great care in the preparation of this syllabus and related assessment materials to avoid bias of any kind. To comply with the UK Equality Act (2010), Cambridge has designed this qualification with the aim of avoiding direct and indirect discrimination.

The standard assessment arrangements may present unnecessary barriers for candidates with disabilities or learning difficulties. Arrangements can be put in place for these candidates to enable them to access the assessments and receive recognition of their attainment. Access arrangements will not be agreed if they give candidates an unfair advantage over others or if they compromise the standards being assessed. Candidates who are unable to access the assessment of any component may be eligible to receive an award based on the parts of the assessment they have taken. Information on access arrangements is found in the *Cambridge Handbook (UK)*, for the relevant year, which can be downloaded from the website [www.cie.org.uk/examsOfficers](http://www.cie.org.uk/examsOfficers)

### Guided learning hours

Cambridge Pre-U syllabuses are designed on the assumption that learners have around 380 guided learning hours per Principal Subject over the duration of the course, but this is for guidance only. The number of hours may vary according to curricular practice and the learners' prior experience of the subject.

### Total qualification time

This syllabus has been designed assuming that the total qualification time per subject will include both guided learning and independent learning activities. The estimated number of guided learning hours for this syllabus is 380 hours over the duration of the course. The total qualification time for this syllabus has been estimated to be approximately 500 hours per subject over the duration of the course. These values are for guidance only. The number of hours required to gain the qualification may vary according to local curricular practice and the learners' prior experience of the subject.

### If you are not yet a Cambridge school

Learn about the benefits of becoming a Cambridge school at [www.cie.org.uk/startcambridge](http://www.cie.org.uk/startcambridge). Email us at [info@cie.org.uk](mailto:info@cie.org.uk) to find out how your organisation can register to become a Cambridge school.

### Language

This syllabus and the associated assessment materials are available in English only.

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