

CHINA STUDIES IN ENGLISH

SYLLABUS

Pre-University

H1

Implementation starting with
2016 Pre-University One Cohort



Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

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1. INTRODUCTION: CHINA STUDIES IN ENGLISH

1.1 VALUE OF CHINA STUDIES IN ENGLISH

The growing importance of China as a regional and global power reinforces the relevance of this subject in equipping our students with the skills and dispositions that allow them to gain a better understanding of China. Political leaders and business leaders in Singapore have highlighted the necessity for Singaporeans to acquire a good understanding of China and the Chinese mindset, and be equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitude to ride on China's growth in the future. The growing interest in China can be seen in the prevalence of courses on contemporary China and the East Asia region in local and overseas universities.

Furthermore, the contemporary nature of China Studies in English (CSE) enables students to apply what they have learnt to their understanding of current developments in China and the world. The subject has strong relevance to real-world developments, which allows students to participate in ongoing discussions about these developments within and outside the classroom. It helps students develop analytical thinking as they examine the challenges and opportunities facing China from multiple angles and perspectives. Students will experience basic policy planning because they will postulate future trends and make recommendations based on current developments, and evaluate the feasibility of their recommendations.

1.2 DESIRED OUTCOMES OF EDUCATION

CSE seeks to nurture in students the attributes outlined in the Desired Outcomes of Education, which are embodied by the following attributes:

- (a) a **confident person** who has a strong sense of right and wrong, is adaptable and resilient, knows himself, is discerning in judgement, thinks independently and critically, and communicates effectively;
- (b) a **self-directed learner** who questions, reflects, perseveres, and takes responsibility for his own learning;
- (c) an **active contributor** who is able to work effectively in teams, is innovative, exercises initiative, takes calculated risks and strives for excellence; and
- (d) a **concerned citizen** who is rooted to Singapore, has strong civic consciousness, is informed about Singapore and the world, and takes an active part in bettering the lives of others.

These attributes are cultivated as the subject guides students towards an analysis of the domestic and external forces that shape contemporary China. Students are encouraged to participate in ongoing discussions about important issues facing China's transformation and its future. In doing so, students become independent and critical thinkers who ask pertinent questions and offer their viewpoints about global issues. They will also become aware of the developments around the world and how these developments will affect Singapore.

1.3 AIMS OF CHINA STUDIES IN ENGLISH

Aligned with the Desired Outcomes of Education, CSE aims to develop in students the relevant knowledge and critical thinking skills to pursue a holistic understanding of contemporary China and to be cognisant of larger global trends. In the long run, it seeks to enable students to potentially contribute in their own capacity to further Singapore-China interactions. Hence, the CSE curriculum seeks to achieve the following student outcomes:

- (a) a person who is '**China-conversant**', where the student will be knowledgeable about the developments in China and sensitive to the thoughts and behaviour of the people of China;
- (b) a person who practises **critical thinking**, where the student will exercise sound reasoning by considering different perspectives and sources of evidence; and
- (c) a person who is **globally aware**, where the student will possess an awareness of global issues and trends through the study of China's relations with other countries and its growth as a regional and global power.

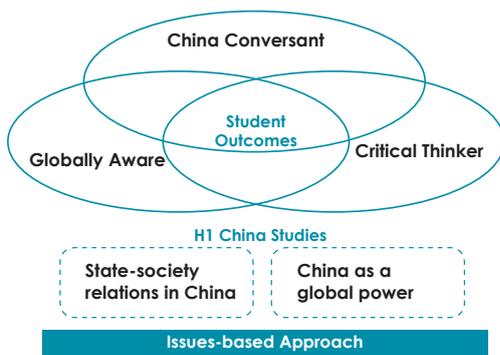


Figure 1: H1 China Studies in English Curriculum Shape

To achieve these aims, the syllabus has adopted an **issues-based approach**, which will focus on key developments and discourse with regard to contemporary China.

In developing in students a critical understanding of contemporary China through an issues-based approach, the study of H1 CSE will be grounded upon an inquiry of two key issues. The key issues serve to guide the discourse on key content dimensions involving China's economy, politics, society and international relations.

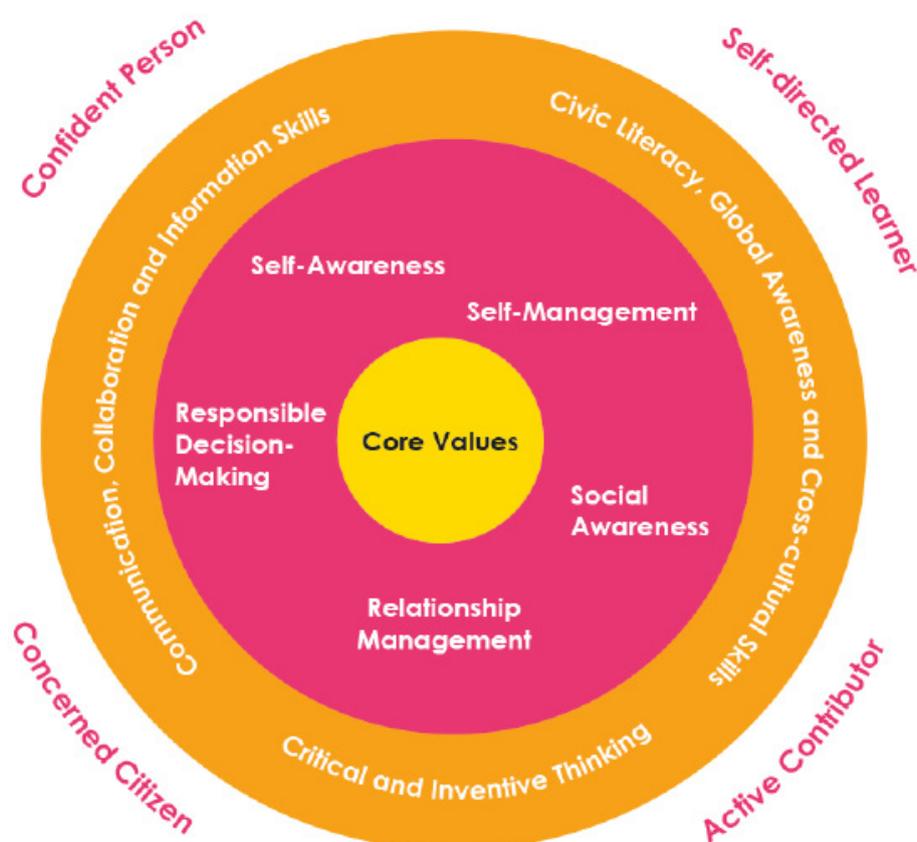
The graphic representation of the curriculum shape in Figure 1 captures the relationship between the issues-based approach and the key issues derived for the study of contemporary China, and how it would lead to achieving the aims of developing students who are China-conversant, critical thinkers and globally aware. The curriculum shape provides a clear and shared understanding of how and what should be taught and learnt in H1 CSE in order to ensure greater alignment between the planned and enacted curricula.

1.4 DEVELOPING 21ST CENTURY COMPETENCIES AND CHARACTER AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

The CSE curriculum is aligned with the 21st Century Competencies framework. Through issues-based learning, students will acquire knowledge of contemporary China while developing 21st century competencies in a constructivist setting. For instance, in examining key issues facing China's transformation, students will continuously engage in critical questions of why China has formulated certain policies or undertaken certain actions. They will also examine how these in turn impact China's economic development and her role in the international arena as a potential great power.

In this regard, the students' understanding of contemporary China will be undergirded by their ability to study the dynamic interrelationships across China's economy, politics, society and international relations (**civic literacy, global awareness and cross-cultural skills**). The discussion of different issues in the classroom (**communication, collaboration and information skills**) will serve as a platform to develop analytical and evaluative skills (**critical and inventive thinking**).

In the same vein, the CSE curriculum supports Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) through the development of skills related to citizenship competencies as articulated in the components of the domain of civic literacy, global awareness and cross-cultural skills. The CSE curriculum serves as a platform for students to attain the CCE learning outcomes, which involve learning concepts such as governance that can also be applied to the study of other countries. In addition, discussions about China's development as well as its external relations allow students to reflect on and engage with issues at the community, national and global levels as informed and responsible citizens.



**Figure 2: Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes¹
(from 2014 onwards)**

¹ More information on MOE's 21st Century Competencies can be obtained from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/21cc/>.

2: PEDAGOGY: LEARNING THROUGH THE ISSUES-BASED APPROACH

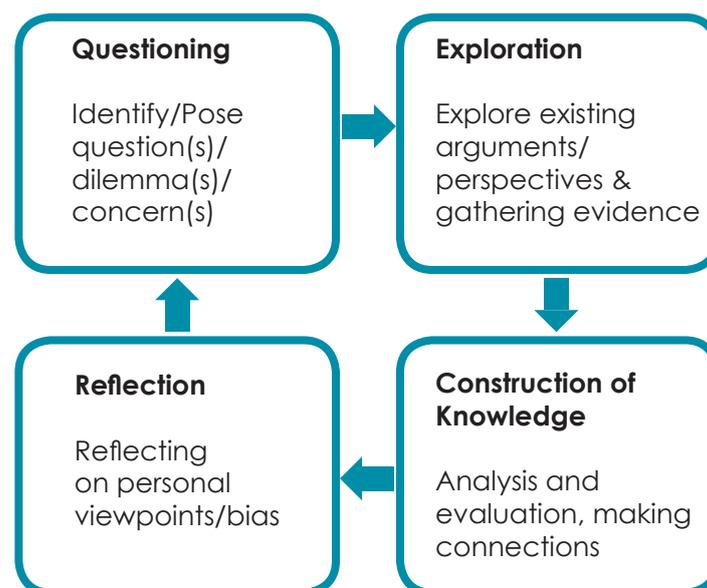
2.1 ISSUES-BASED LEARNING

Considering the aims of CSE, the issues-based learning process seeks to develop in students a critical understanding of key concepts, big ideas and skills necessary to understand China today. The study of key issues facing contemporary China is presented as questions that will engage students in contemporary debates among scholars and policymakers studying China. This is reflected in the aspect of **questioning**.

Furthermore, the process will make the study of the subject more interesting and relevant to the students' experiences, since it goes beyond the study of abstract ideas and principles featured in textbooks or classroom lessons. Through **exploration**, students will make connections between what is studied and the real-world context, connecting individual choices to public policy issues and to the ongoing and fundamental dilemmas of human existence (Ross, 2006).

Construction of knowledge results from the earlier exploration in which students were given the opportunity to analyse, evaluate and make connections using the data and evidence gathered. In the context of H1 CSE, this process can contribute to a serious examination and discourse concerning China's state-society relations and China as a global power.

The process of **reflection** will help students be aware of how their experiences and deeply rooted beliefs may affect judgement. Engaging in reflective thinking will help students practise persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge (Dewey, 1933), so that they can arrive at a more informed and balanced judgement in dealing with complex dilemmas.



The characteristics and value of issues-based learning can be summarised in four main points:

- (a) **Questioning:** The study of issues poses real-life situations and dilemmas that can create a form of cognitive dissonance, which then stimulates a student's need and desire to investigate.
- (b) **Exploration:** The study of issues highlights multiple perspectives and interpretations that motivate students to evaluate and reflect.
- (c) **Construction of Knowledge:** The study of issues promotes more meaningful and constructivist-based classroom activities.
- (d) **Reflection:** The learning experiences created through an issues-based approach will promote more critical and reflective thinking in students.

2.2 CONSTRUCTIVISM IN CHINA STUDIES IN ENGLISH

Issues-based learning supports and offers opportunities for constructivism to take place within and outside the classroom. Issues-based learning is appropriate for CSE because it places emphasis on contemporary problems and makes connections with students' current realities. Furthermore, it encourages students to carry out research and learn from multiple sources beyond lecture notes.

There are also many similarities in the pedagogical methods fronted by constructivist approaches and issues-based learning. Richardson (2003) describes constructivist pedagogies as being 'student-centred', purposeful group-dialogue, using different modes of instruction, creating opportunities for learners to change their understanding and developing their awareness of metacognition. Issues-based learning seeks to create critical dialogue and reflective discussion. The possible formats to encourage dialogue and discussion are group work, role-playing, simulation, student research, the Socratic seminar, and a variety of formats for large and small group discussion.

3. CONTENT: H1 CHINA STUDIES IN ENGLISH SYLLABUS

3.1 UNDERSTANDING THE SYLLABUS DESIGN

Bearing in mind the aims of China Studies, the H1 CSE syllabus was designed based on several principles. The syllabus should:

- (a) highlight the key understanding and big ideas associated with the study of contemporary China;
- (b) identify key issues related to China's transformation and its future that would allow for the study of the interrelationships between different knowledge dimensions and perspectives;
- (c) create an awareness of the purpose of the subject in society and the world; and
- (d) ensure alignment with the outcomes and intent of MOE's Desired Outcomes of Education, 21st Century Competencies and outcomes, and ICT Masterplan 3.

3.2 SYLLABUS AIMS

H1 CSE seeks to enhance the students' understanding of contemporary China through highlighting the key understanding and big ideas associated with the study of China while creating an awareness of the purpose of the subject in the society and the world. Hence, H1 CSE is a starting point for students to pursue and obtain a holistic understanding of contemporary China in order to be China-conversant, to be sensitive to the differences between Singapore and China and, in the future, to potentially contribute in their own capacity to further Singapore-China interactions. In addition, it aims to develop students' critical thinking skills and awareness of global developments.

H1 CSE aims to enable students to understand China's transformation and its future by:

- (a) examining the key issues of state-society relations and international relations in contemporary China;
- (b) developing skills in evaluating multiple perspectives to arrive at an informed judgement of issues; and
- (c) developing an awareness of, and interest in, developments in China and its interactions with the world.

3.3 KEY FEATURES OF THE SYLLABUS

Knowledge and Understanding of Key Issues

The syllabus focuses on China's transformation since 1978 and its future, and is grounded in an examination of two key issues facing contemporary China. This syllabus frames two key issues:

- State-society relations in China
- China as a global power

The study of these two key issues in the H1 syllabus will help students engage in contemporary debates centred on the following key questions:

- ❖ How stable is China's socio-political system?
- ❖ How does the rise of China impact its external relations?

Issues-based Learning Outcomes

Instead of having a specific learning outcome for each content topic, the learning outcomes in the new H1 CSE syllabus are pegged instead to each key issue, framing the scope of content topics. The purpose of the revised learning outcomes is to enable students to understand how the content topics fit into a broader understanding of each of the two key issues.

In addressing these learning outcomes, teachers could refer to the following guidelines in engaging with the content topics located within each content dimension. This will allow them to identify and scope the specific content to be taught in alignment with the requirements of the learning outcomes.

- Identify the key issue.
- Identify the learning outcome from the issue identified.
- Select content topic from content dimensions and select relevant knowledge that would help students address the key issue and meet the learning outcome.

3.4 SYLLABUS CONTENT

Key Issue 1: State-Society Relations in China

With a huge population and an enormous one-party government that has been the prime mover of China's development, the influence of both society and the state remains a key force in determining China's future progress as a country. Significantly, the domestic peace and stability required for China's sustained development hinges on the relationship and interaction between the state and society. With Chinese society becoming more open and diversified, the state is adapting to new modes of governance in addressing the various social issues arising in the country. The relationship and interaction between the state and society will be important indicators of China's domestic peace and stability.

Learning Outcomes

Through the study of this issue, students will be able to discuss:

- the key societal changes in China due to its development;
- the role of the Chinese state in society;
- social and political challenges created by China's development; and
- the effectiveness of the Chinese government in managing a changing society.

Content Dimensions

- **Societal changes**
 - o Changing demographics
 - migration
 - ageing population
 - o Urbanisation
 - growth of cities
 - o Growing affluence
 - the urban middle class
 - o Pluralised society
 - income and regional disparity
- **The Chinese state**
 - o One-party rule
 - o Legitimising strategies
 - importance of ideology
 - performance-based legitimacy
- **State-society interactions**
 - o Growing civil society
 - non-governmental organisations
 - the Internet
 - mass incidents
 - o Social development and management
 - social welfare provisions
 - online supervision
 - public security

Key Issue 2: China as a Global Power

An ascendant China on the global stage has sparked debates about the opportunities and threats posed by China. While diplomacy has been used by the Chinese leadership to allay concerns over its more aggressive territorial claims and increased global presence, China has concomitantly safeguarded its national interests through policies that have been deemed contrary to China's 'Peaceful Rise' claims. The study of the twin influences of domestic pressures and international norms that shape Chinese foreign policy would allow a better understanding of this dichotomy in the way China manages its external relations.

Learning Outcomes

Through the study of this issue, students will be able to discuss:

- the factors contributing to China's foreign policy goals;
- China's evolving role in global affairs;
- the challenges and opportunities facing China in its relations with the United States and Japan
- China's effectiveness in pursuing its foreign policy goals.

Content Dimensions

- **Factors influencing China's foreign policy goals**
 - o Guiding principles of China's international relations
 - o National interests
 - o Popular nationalism
- **China as a global power**
 - o Involvement in international economic and political institutions
 - global economic stability
 - environment and climate change
 - international security
 - o Aspects of China's growing power
 - military modernisation programme
 - soft power
- **Challenges and opportunities facing China's bilateral relations**
 - o Sino-US relations: Cooperation and competition in Asia-Pacific
 - trade and investments
 - national security
 - o Sino-Japan relations
 - bilateral trade
 - historical controversies

4. ASSESSMENT IN H1 CHINA STUDIES IN ENGLISH

4.1 FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Assessment is a broad term that refers to the process of obtaining information for making decisions about students, curricula, programmes, schools and educational policies, based on the degree to which students have achieved the aims of the syllabus. Assessment is broadly classified into two types: formative and summative.

Formative Assessment (or Assessment for Learning) refers to the manner in which feedback from assessment is used to improve teaching and learning, and can be a very powerful tool for enhancing learning. In formative assessment, teachers and students set learning targets, assess present levels of understanding and work strategically to narrow the distance between the two. All these take place during instruction, and are undertaken with the goal of improving the students' achievement of intended learning outcomes.

The 'A' Level examination is an example of **Summative Assessment** (or Assessment of Learning). This is more concerned with summarising the learning that students have achieved at particular points in time. It is designed to determine the extent to which instructional goals have been achieved, and is used to make decisions such as placement to the next level of study and admission to the next stage of education.

In alignment with general principles of assessment, the techniques used in meaningful summative assessment are determined by curriculum and instructional goals. This contributes to the validity of summative assessment data in reflecting the students' achievement of intended learning outcomes. The Assessment Objectives below highlight what students are required to demonstrate at the summative assessment level examinations and would also be referenced by teachers over the course of designing formative assessment opportunities.

4.2 ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES (AOs)

Candidates are expected to:

AO1: Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate knowledge of issues in contemporary China.
AO2: Analysis and Evaluation of Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critically examine issues and developments.• Analyse and evaluate different perspectives.• Construct coherent and substantiated arguments.• Make judgements and reach conclusions based on reasoned consideration of issues.
AO3: Interpretation and Evaluation of Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interpret, analyse and evaluate information from a range of sources.• Postulate outcomes and developments based on information.• Justify opinions and recommendations.• Make judgements and reach conclusions based on reasoned consideration of information.

4.3 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION GRID

The assessment comprises one written examination paper. The paper will consist of two sections: Section A (Case Study) and Section B (Essay Questions).

SECTION	DESCRIPTION	ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE	MARKS	OVERALL WEIGHTING	DURATION
A (Case Study)	Candidates answer the compulsory case study comprising three sub-questions.	AO1+AO2+AO3	30 marks	37.5%	3 hours
B (Essay Questions)	Candidates answer two essay questions. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Answer 1 out of 2 questions on <u>Key Issue 1</u>.• Answer 1 out of 2 questions on <u>Key Issue 2</u>.	AO1+AO2	50 marks	62.5%	

Note: AO1 forms part of the testing of AO2 and AO3.

4.4 DESCRIPTION OF ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS

Section A (Case Study)

The Case Study will consist of a collection of material, containing three to four sources and no more than three A4 pages in length, on any one of the two key issues in the syllabus content. The given material will provide different perspectives and opinions. It will include both textual and non-textual sources (e.g., maps, pictures, photos and statistics) but the interpretation of these sources will not require specialised knowledge of a particular discipline. The Case Study will require students to interpret, analyse and evaluate the given material, and make postulations on outcomes and developments based on the given information.

The Case Study questions will be assessed using the Levels of Response Mark Scheme (LORMS). LORMS involves qualitative judgements and awards marks according to the level of skill or understanding shown in the answer. The marking scheme will be specific to the target objective of the question set. There will be different levels of skill or understanding in relation to the target objective, as demonstrated by the students in their answers. The marking scheme will thus be question-specific.

Section B (Essay Questions)

Students are required to show a depth of understanding of issues and evidence of reading in their answers. The answers should demonstrate critical thinking skills such as the ability to interpret and evaluate different points of view, and to present thoughtful and analytical arguments. Students are required to answer the essay questions in continuous prose.

The essay questions will be assessed using holistic level descriptors. The assessment involves qualitative rather than quantitative evaluation. Judgements on the appropriate band of each essay assessed will be based on the principle of 'best fit' determined by the descriptions within each band comprising several assessment criteria.