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# Setting a Policy for AP<sup>®</sup> Chinese Language and Culture

As part of the AP<sup>®</sup> Program's World Languages Initiative, the AP Chinese Language and Culture course was introduced in the 2006-07 academic year in high schools across the country, culminating in the first AP Chinese Language and Culture Exam administration in May 2007. The purpose of this guide is to provide college faculty and administrators with curricular content and sample exam questions for the new AP Chinese course and exam to facilitate the establishment of appropriate credit and placement policies for AP Chinese.

The Advanced Placement Program<sup>®</sup> (AP) provides motivated students with the opportunity to take college-level courses while still in high school. Students demonstrate their mastery of the curriculum by taking AP Exams—37 exams, including the new exams in Chinese and Japanese, are available in 22 subject areas. In 2007, more than 1.4 million students took AP Exams worldwide with approximately 15,500 schools participating. Of the 2.5 million AP Exams taken in 2007, about 145,000 were in modern languages. More than 3,000 colleges and universities, including many international institutions, accept qualifying AP Exam scores for credit, placement, or both.

Throughout its 52-year history, the AP Program has maintained high standards of rigor in its courses and exams. Since its inception, AP has been a respected force in American education due in particular to the critical involvement of college and university faculty members.

## Chinese Faculty Involvement in AP

College and university faculty members play a vital role in every stage of development and scoring of an AP course and exam, helping to ensure their high quality. Each AP discipline has its own Development Committee—composed of college and university professors and experienced AP teachers—that is responsible for creating the course guidelines and exam questions. College and university faculty members also serve in leadership positions at the annual AP Exam Reading. Within each discipline, these positions include that of the Chief Reader, who is responsible for establishing the exam-scoring guidelines and overseeing the evaluation of student performances on the exam's free-response questions.

“The AP Chinese Language and Culture curriculum and examination were developed through the joint efforts of outstanding educators representing both secondary schools and institutions of higher education in the field of Chinese language teaching. The innovative course design will not only effectively promote and facilitate the learning of Chinese as a foreign language at the secondary school level, but it will also help strengthen the study of Chinese at the college and university level. It will enhance K–16 articulation and encourage students to start the learning of Chinese at earlier grades, which is essential for producing the specialists, now in high demand, who can function professionally in Chinese.”

—Jianhua Bai, AP Chinese Language and Culture Development Committee Chair  
Kenyon College

The College Board publication *AP and Higher Education* discusses the following topics at greater length: how to set an AP policy, AP research studies, the development of AP courses and exams, and the AP Exam scoring. For more information or to request a copy of this publication, please go to [apcentral.collegeboard.com/highered](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/highered).

“As a member of the College Board’s AP Chinese Task Force, I can assure you that the College Board does not view AP Chinese as some sort of cash cow. The still comparatively small number of students enrolled in K–12-based Chinese language programs in the United States, which can be safely estimated at no more than 25,000 students (based upon data last calculated by the Secondary School Chinese Language Center at Princeton University in the fall of 2001), precludes any such possibility. But I can also assure you that the College Board is absolutely committed to developing a quality AP Chinese curriculum and exam that will serve to increase and expand the study of diverse languages and cultures in American secondary schools.”

—Scott McGuiness, Defense Language Institute  
Washington, DC

## How to Set an AP Policy

The College Board encourages colleges and universities to base their AP policy decisions on data and research, as well as on those factors unique to each institution, student body, and academic discipline. The best way for colleges and universities to determine their AP credit and placement policies is to conduct their own research on the performance of AP and non-AP students at their own institution and in their own departments.

### Research on AP Foreign Language and Student Performance

Research studies show that students who do well on an AP Exam are academically prepared to place out of a corresponding college course and move on to the next higher-level course in the discipline. See Table 1 for data from a research study comparing AP and non-AP student performance in third-, fourth-, and fifth-level college Spanish courses.

Table 1: Student Performance in Third-, Fourth-, and Fifth-Level Spanish Courses; AP Spanish Language Students Versus Non-AP Students

	AP EXAM GRADE	THIRD LEVEL		FOURTH LEVEL		FIFTH LEVEL	
		GPA	PERCENT OF STUDENTS SCORING AN A OR B	GPA	PERCENT OF STUDENTS SCORING AN A OR B	GPA	PERCENT OF STUDENTS SCORING AN A OR B
AP Students Who Place Out of Intro. Courses	AP 5	3.46	92	3.64	93	3.64	93
	AP 4	3.67	92	3.68	96	3.68	96
	AP 3	3.65	98	3.53	98	3.53	98
	AP 2	3.59	98	3.43	96	3.43	96
Students Who Complete Intro. Courses	Non-AP	3.15	81	3.29	89	3.29	89

Taking the AP course and exam stimulates further interest in the subject area and encourages deeper disciplinary knowledge.

Research studies show that students who take the AP Exams are significantly more likely to take further course work in the same subject area than students who do not take the AP Exam. See Table 2 for data from this research study.

Table 2: Additional College Spanish Course Work; AP Spanish Language Students Versus Non-AP Students

	AP EXAM GRADE	PERCENT TAKING ADDITIONAL SPANISH COURSES	AVERAGE NUMBER OF COLLEGE SPANISH COURSES TAKEN
AP Spanish Language Students	AP 5	51	1.6
	AP 4	55	1.7
	AP 3	49	1.5
	AP 2	49	1.5
	AP 1	59	1.4
Non-AP Students	Non-AP	23	0.6

PDF copies of research studies on AP student performance can be found at [professionals.collegeboard.com/data-reports-research/ap](http://professionals.collegeboard.com/data-reports-research/ap).

## Interpreting AP Chinese Language and Culture Exam Grades

In addition to research studies that track AP students’ performance once they’ve entered higher education, the College Board conducts college comparability studies to measure the degree to which the AP Exams are equivalent in content and difficulty to corresponding college courses. The AP Exam Grade-Setting process is established so that the lowest composite score that earns an AP grade of 5 is equivalent to the average score earned by college students who receive grades of A in a comparable course. The lowest score that earns an AP grade of 4 is equivalent to the average B, and the lowest score that earns an AP grade of 3 is equivalent to the average C.

Seventeen colleges and universities participated in the AP Chinese Comparability Study conducted immediately prior to the administration of the inaugural 2007 AP Exam. These included a broad sample of institution types: highly selective, public and private, research, and liberal arts. In each of these institutions, participating

students were in the fourth semester (or its equivalent) of Chinese language instruction; the point at which the AP Chinese Exam is targeted. The college students responded to various portions of the 2007 AP Exam, and their responses, along with those of the high school AP students, were blind-scored by the Exam Readers. Their scores, along with their professors' reporting of their final course grades, help to establish where the AP grades are set and to substantiate the claims set forth above.

The research that the College Board conducts is intended to help institutions and academic departments as they establish appropriate AP policies. AP Central® ([apcentral.collegeboard.com](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com)), the College Board's online home for AP professionals, contains other resources that may assist in this process, including the Course Description, released exam questions, and sample student responses at different levels of ability.

For more information go to:  
[apcentral.collegeboard.com/chinese](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/chinese).

“The AP Chinese course and exam have been carefully designed to reflect twenty-first-century standards for foreign language learning. They conceptualize language within the *Standards*' 'Five Cs' framework—Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities—and teach language through the three communicative modes: Interpretive, Interpersonal, and Presentational.”

—Tao-Chung Yao, AP Chinese Language and Culture  
Chief Reader, University of Hawaii at Manoa

“Unlike most of the currently available tests that assess only listening and reading skills, the AP Chinese Language and Culture Examination is much more comprehensive in that it evaluates speaking and writing in addition to the aforementioned skills. As a result, this exam will provide the most reliable information for college placement.”

—Jianhua Bai, AP Chinese Language and Culture  
Development Committee Chair, Kenyon College

## The AP Chinese Language and Culture Course

The AP Chinese Language and Culture course is designed to be comparable to fourth semester (or the equivalent) college/university courses in Mandarin Chinese. These college courses, which deepen students' immersion into the language and culture of the Chinese-speaking world, typically represent the point at which students complete approximately 250 hours of college-level classroom instruction. Course work reflects the proficiencies exhibited throughout the Intermediate range, as described in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) *Proficiency Guidelines*.

The AP course prepares students to demonstrate their level of Chinese proficiency across the three communicative modes (Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational) and the five goal areas (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities) as outlined in the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*. Its aim is to provide students with ongoing and varied opportunities to further develop their proficiencies across the full range of language skills within a cultural frame of reference reflective of the richness of Chinese language and culture. The course was designed by a task force made up of experienced college faculty and master teachers of Chinese at the secondary level. AP Chinese Language and Culture teachers plan and implement a course that focuses on language proficiency, while interweaving level- and age-appropriate cultural content throughout the course and providing for frequent formative assessment of students' developing proficiencies within the context of their learning. Instructional materials and activities are carefully and strategically adapted from authentic sources to support the linguistic and cultural goals of the course.

## AP Credit Policy Info on the Web

Information about AP credit and placement policies at more than 1,000 colleges and universities is available on the College Board's Web site at [www.collegeboard.com/ap/creditpolicy](http://www.collegeboard.com/ap/creditpolicy).

## Goals

This chart outlines the student learning objectives for a typical course, as well as typical ways for students to demonstrate their learning accomplishments. This specific list of course objectives is an example; different AP courses may have slightly different but comparable objectives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	EVIDENCE OF LEARNING
Interpretive Mode	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to comprehend and interpret spoken Chinese in a variety of social and cultural contexts that pertain to daily life.</li> <li>• Ability to comprehend and interpret a variety of nontechnical written Chinese texts that pertain to daily life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student responds appropriately to questions requiring identification of main ideas, supporting details, and appropriate inferences—in some cases, through the application of basic cultural knowledge—based on spoken Chinese in the form of conversations, instructions, broadcasts, announcements, and recorded telephone messages.</li> <li>• Student responds appropriately to questions requiring identification of main ideas, supporting details, and appropriate inferences—in some cases, through the application of basic cultural knowledge—based on written texts in the form of notes, e-mails, letters, posters, advertisements, signs, brochures, newspaper articles, and stories.</li> </ul>
Interpersonal Mode	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to comprehend, draw inferences from, and respond to spoken and written Chinese in a variety of personal, social, and cultural contexts.</li> <li>• Ability to interact in a variety of situations in cultural contexts.</li> <li>• Ability to use critical thinking skills (e.g., analyzing, comparing, synthesizing, and evaluating) to derive meaning from context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student responds appropriately to spoken and written stimuli in a variety of personal and culturally appropriate contexts (e.g., personal information, family, friends, school, leisure activities).</li> <li>• Student interacts appropriately, including negotiating meaning, in a given cultural context.</li> <li>• Student identifies appropriate continuation of a conversation that implies a certain context.</li> <li>• Student responds appropriately, or identifies appropriate response, in social interactions centered on cultural acts such as complimenting, offering food, inviting, receiving a gift, introducing oneself and/or others, expressing appreciation to a host, expressing regret, and apologizing.</li> </ul>
Presentational Mode	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to provide information about events in immediate environment (including family, school, community, and country) and to demonstrate some degree of spontaneous application of language.</li> <li>• Ability to describe an event or activity in a cohesive and coherent manner with linguistic accuracy.</li> <li>• Ability to demonstrate cultural appropriateness through spoken and written discourse.</li> <li>• Ability to compare and contrast phenomena and explain one's preference.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student makes an oral presentation on a culturally relevant topic.</li> <li>• Student writes a narrative based on a series of pictures or writes a letter on a personal topic.</li> <li>• Student orally explains similarities and differences and provides a rationale for a preference.</li> </ul>

“The AP Chinese Exam grades will become available each year in early July and can be reliably used for college placement purposes, saving college Chinese language teachers the time and trouble of preparing and administering their own placement tests for new students. The difficulty level of the materials used in the AP Chinese course and exam is compatible with that used in many fourth-semester college courses in the United States, such that a student who performs very well on the exam will have demonstrated the proficiency required to enter a third-year college course.”

—Tao-Chung Yao, AP Chinese Language and Culture Chief Reader, University of Hawaii at Manoa

AP Chinese teachers and principals at schools where AP Chinese Language and Culture is taught must certify that their courses follow all the requirements stipulated by the Development Committee, including using college-level materials, in order to ensure that the AP course reflects college-level standards. By completing this AP Course Audit, high schools receive permission to label their Chinese courses “AP.” Each fall, colleges and universities receive a list of all high schools authorized to use the “AP” designation for their Chinese courses.

## The AP Chinese Language and Culture Exam

The AP Chinese Language and Culture Exam is approximately three hours in length. It assesses the student's level of Mandarin Chinese language proficiency and cultural knowledge across the three communicative modes outlined previously, all within the context of the five broad goals of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*.

The exam is computer based. Each student works at an individual computer, which processes everything read, heard, written, or spoken by the student. That is, the student reads on the screen, listens through headphones, types using the keyboard, and speaks into a microphone. There is no paper component; although the student may use paper to take notes during the exam, the proctor will collect the notes at the end of the exam, and they will not be graded.

Students have some choices for reading and writing in Chinese. The display and input options selected by the student have no effect on the student's grade.

- All Chinese text displayed on the screen is available to students in either traditional characters or simplified characters. Students can toggle between the two versions if necessary.

- Students have two options for typing Chinese text. The available input methods are the Microsoft *Pinyin* IME (MSPY), which is based on Hanyu Pinyin, and the Microsoft *New Phonetic* IME, which is based on Zhuyin Fuhao (Bopomofo).

There are two sections in the exam:

**Section I** consists of multiple-choice questions that assess communication skills in the Interpersonal and Interpretive modes.

**Part A** assesses Interpersonal communication skills in the listening modality by requiring the student to identify the appropriate continuation of a conversation. It also assesses Interpretive communication skills by requiring the student to answer questions about different types of listening stimuli.

**Part B** assesses interpretive communication skills by requiring the student to answer questions about different types of reading texts.

**Section II**, the free-response section, assesses communication skills in the Interpersonal and Presentational modes by requiring the student to produce written and spoken responses.

**Part A** assesses writing in the Presentational mode by requiring the student to narrate a story suggested by a series of pictures as well as to write a letter on a given topic. It also assesses writing in the Interpersonal mode by requiring the student to read and answer an e-mail message and then listen to and relay a voice message.

**Part B** assesses speaking in the Interpersonal mode by requiring the student to respond to a series of thematically linked questions as part of a simulated conversation. It also assesses speaking in the Presentational mode by requiring the student to make two presentations: one on a given aspect of Chinese culture and another on a plan for an event involving a cultural component.

Each part of the exam contributes a specific portion of the final AP grade. Grouped by communicative mode, the various parts contribute as follows: Interpretive—40 percent, Interpersonal—30 percent, and Presentational—30 percent. Grouped by language modality, the various parts contribute as follows: Listening—25 percent, Reading—25 percent, Writing—25 percent, and Speaking—25 percent.

## Sample AP Chinese Exam Questions

### Sample Listening Question

**Note:** In this part of the exam, the student may NOT toggle back and forth among questions.

Students are instructed to listen to the following passage. After listening to this passage once, the students will have 12 seconds (for this passage) to answer each question.

(Woman) 聽說你考上南京大學了, 祝賀你啊!

(Man) 哪兒能跟你比啊, 考上北大了, 真羨慕你。

(Woman) 你打算學什麼專業啊?

(Man) 學醫, 你呢?

(Woman) 做醫生太辛苦, 我要學法律, 以後當律師。

What does the woman ask the man about?

- (A) What colleges he is applying to.
- (B) What he will major in.
- (C) His opinion of certain schools.
- (D) His preferred location for attending college.

The woman expresses a desire to

- (A) study medicine
- (B) get a part-time job
- (C) become a lawyer
- (D) attend Nanjing University

What is the woman's reaction to the man's plans?

- (A) She thinks that the school he will attend is better than hers.
- (B) She suggests that he study law.
- (C) She says that she is envious of his good luck.
- (D) She says that she would not make the same career choice.

### Sample Reading Question

**Note:** In this part of the exam, the student may move back and forth among all the questions.

Read this public sign.

[Traditional-character version]  
報章期刊閱畢後請放回原處

[Simplified-character version]  
報章期刊閱畢後請放回原處

Where would the sign most likely appear?

- (A) In a department store.
- (B) In a park.
- (C) At a newsstand.
- (D) In a library.

What is the purpose of the sign?

- (A) To give directions to a particular location.
- (B) To advertise a new product.
- (C) To request cooperation from the users of a service.
- (D) To post the penalty for violating a regulation.

### Sample Writing Question

**Note:** In this part of the exam, the student may NOT move back and forth among questions.

For this question, the student is provided with four pictures that present a story and is told to imagine he or she is writing the story to a friend. The student will need to narrate a complete story as suggested by the pictures. The story should be written in a manner that is as complete and as culturally appropriate as possible, taking into account the purpose and the person described.



## How to Get Involved

There are many ways college and university faculty members can help maintain the high standards of the AP Program:

- Participate in a college comparability study
- Become an AP Reader
- Contribute multiple-choice test items for the AP Exam
- Become an AP Faculty Consultant

For more information, please go to: [apcentral.collegeboard.com/highered/getinvolved](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/highered/getinvolved)

### Sample Writing Question

Students are instructed to imagine they are sharing an apartment with some Chinese friends. The student must relay a message left on the answering machine for one of those friends. The message will be played twice, then the student is instructed to e-mail a message, including the important details, to the friend.

(Woman) 喂，麗麗不在家嗎？我是小文，是麗麗的同學。麗麗，這個星期六我過生日，想請你晚上七點來參加我的生日晚會。我現在住在學院路光明園十二號，你可以坐十八路公共汽車到光明園站下車，下車後往南走五十多米就到了。請你一定要來哦。謝謝！

### Sample Speaking Question

**Note:** In this part of the exam, the student may NOT move back and forth among questions.

Students will participate in a simulated conversation with an interviewer about an application for a scholarship to study in China. The student will have 20 seconds to record a response to each question as fully and as appropriately as possible each time it is his or her turn to speak.

(Woman) 請你談談你是怎麼開始對中國感興趣的。  
(20 seconds)

(Woman) 如果能去中國留學，你想選修什麼樣的課程？你為什麼要選修這些課程呢？  
(20 seconds)

(Woman) 你想到中國哪個城市去留學？為什麼你要選這個城市呢？  
(20 seconds)

(Woman) 假如你能去中國留學，學校會安排你參加一些課外的文化活動。你對中國化的哪個方面最感興趣？  
(20 seconds)

(Woman) 去中國留學跟你將來的就業計劃有什麼關係？  
(20 seconds)

(Woman) 關於這個去中國留學的項目，你有什麼問題嗎？  
(20 seconds)

## Contact Us

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## The College Board: Connecting Students to College Success

The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 5,400 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves seven million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges through major programs and services in college admissions, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT<sup>®</sup>, the PSAT/NMSQT<sup>®</sup>, and the Advanced Placement Program<sup>®</sup> (AP<sup>®</sup>). The College Board is committed to the principles of excellence and equity, and that commitment is embodied in all of its programs, services, activities, and concerns. For further information, visit [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).