

PROJECT WORK AND LANGUAGE ORAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT: THE SINGAPORE EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Much scholarly work has been published on the theoretical concept, considerations and challenges of criterion-referenced assessment. In criterion-referenced assessment, students' performances are marked and graded against a set of explicit performance criteria; the 'standards' are implicit. This paper shares on Singapore's experience in using criterion-referenced assessment in national examinations where relevant. In Singapore, criterion-referenced approach is used mainly in the assessment of coursework subjects and in high-inference assessment tasks requiring sophisticated professional judgement. The paper examines the various measures put in place to assure assessment quality as well as issues faced in implementing criterion-referenced approach, using A-Level Project Work subject and A-Level oral skills in Language subjects as illustrations. The intent is to provide a practitioner's (that is, an examining agency's) perspective on the use of this approach in national examinations. Philosophically and conceptually, criterion-referencing is similar to standards-referencing, except that the achievement in standards-based approach is referenced to predetermined standards of performance. Broadly speaking, while Project Work and Language oral skills are criterion-referenced for teaching and learning in the classroom, Singapore's assessment of student achievements is largely referenced to standards, taking into consideration various sources of evidence as assessment results are high-stakes and used for progression and certification. The paper concludes with key learning points on balancing the effects of examination in Singapore and shares on our path forward to promote a positive educational experience even in the place of a high-stakes assessment environment.

Criterion-Referenced Approach

First introduced by Robert Glaser (1963), criterion-referenced assessment awards grades based on the quality of the students' work as defined by some criteria without referencing to the achievements of other students in the course. Sadler (1987, p.194) defines criterion as "a distinguishing property or characteristic of anything, by which its quality can be judged or estimated, or by which a decision or classification may be made". In short, criteria are attributes that allow for judgement of students' work. These attributes could be knowledge or skills.

Criterion-referenced assessment focuses on describing clearly the intended learning outcomes, often in terms of observable behaviours as performance criteria and then designing an appropriate assessment to collect evidence of these outcomes. As students' work is assessed in relation to the performance criteria, the achievement of learning outcomes and the grades awarded are closely linked in criterion-referenced assessment. Underlying this approach is a concern for greater accountability regarding student achievements; that the student's work should be graded on its own

merit rather than in comparison with other students' work, and that the work should be graded against the specified criteria which in turn could be used as basis to explain judgements of students' work, and to promote better instruction. Criterion-referenced assessment is opposed to what is commonly referred to as norm-referenced assessment which is characterised by pre-fixed percentages for each grade. The latter approach takes no account of the quality of teaching and learning in awarding grades. The intention is to maintain standards and minimise grade inflation.

Applying Criterion-Referenced Approach in Project Work and Language Oral Skills Assessment

In Singapore's national examinations, criterion-referenced approach is used mainly in the assessment of coursework subjects such as Project Work, Design and Technology, Art and Music as well as in high-inference¹ assessment components such as oral skills and essay for Language subjects. The desired student outcomes of these subjects involve the demonstration of key skills and knowledge that are best assessed using explicit sets of performance criteria with accompanying scoring rubrics aligned to the key learning outcomes. We will illustrate using A-Level Project Work and A-Level oral skills in Languages. Broadly speaking though, while Project Work and Language oral skills are criterion-referenced for teaching and learning in the classroom, Singapore's assessment of student achievements is largely referenced to standards.

Project Work

Project Work was introduced in 2003 as an A-Level coursework subject for students to "undergo a different thinking and learning experience in schools in order to be more ready for the future" (Chong & Leong, 2014, p.2). In Singapore, the primary focus of exit examinations is mainly on certifying students' achievement in the subject disciplines. There were, however concerns that this focus on disciplines had led to compartmentalised learning with students lacking the ability to integrate and apply knowledge learnt from different subject domains. Interdisciplinary Project Work was hence introduced to provide students with the opportunities to work in groups, synthesise knowledge from different subject areas, and critically and creatively apply it to real life situations. The intent is for students to acquire key 21st century competencies, namely, knowledge application, communication, collaboration and independent learning, to better prepare them for lifelong learning and the workplace. Of the four learning outcomes, knowledge application and communication are formally examined in the summative examination via three components: the groups' Written Report, Group Project File and Oral Presentation whilst collaboration and independent learning are assessed formatively.

The examining agency sets task requirement each year for students to carry out their research in groups of 4-5 which are pre-assigned by the schools. The tasks are

¹ High inference tasks predominantly in form of essays are used to assess soft pure disciplines such as Humanities and Languages. Professional judgement for high inference assessment tasks is sophisticated, complex and subjective and is conferred by the knowledge community based upon familiarity with expectations, conventions, values and theoretical influences in the field (Dunn,L.,Parry, S.& Morgan,C., 2002).

sufficiently broad to allow for students to engage in a range of project topics over a period of 6 months. Typically, the tasks would require students to identify a problem or a case, carry out research on the nature and implications of the problem or case, and propose strategies to address the problem or case.

Written Report: At the end of the project, the group submits a Written Report of 2500-3000 words. The Written Report is assessed on four criteria (substantiation of ideas, generation of ideas, analysis of ideas, and organisation of ideas). A group score is awarded for the Written Report with every member of the group receiving the same score.

Group Project File: Each student in the group makes an individual submission that details his/her contribution to the generation, analysis and evaluation of ideas in the course of working towards the project goals. The student will earn an individual score commensurate with his/her achievement for the component.

Oral Presentation: Based on the group's project topic, each student in the group will present his/her portion in 5 minutes. During the Question & Answer (Q&A) session, each student will be given opportunity to respond to a question. The assessment criteria focus on fluency and clarity of speech, awareness of audience, and response to questions during the Q&A session.

The assessment scheme of A-Level Project Work is criterion-referenced. All three components are assessed directly against the criteria which are referenced to three levels of performance: *Approaching Expectation*, *Meeting Expectation* and *Exceeding Expectation*. Scores are awarded to candidates based on the levels of performance attained for each criterion. The scores of the three components are then aggregated to obtain the overall score. In other words, our system operates using what can be best described as 'weak criterion referencing'. Weak criterion-referencing, while "maintaining the general quality of examination performance required for each grade, given the difficulty of the examination", does not demand evidence of specific achievement (Baird, Cresswell, & Newton, 2000, p.215). As such, students do not have to meet the performance standards of all the criteria in the assessment to achieve a given grade; they are allowed to compensate for weaker performance in one or more areas with stronger performance in others. This compensatory approach will be more appropriate and fairer in the context of general qualification assessment, especially when the subject examined is interdisciplinary in nature.

Table 1 outlines the assessment criteria for the Written Report of Project Work. See Appendix A for an example of a task requirement and the assessment rubrics for the three Project Work components.

Table 1: Assessment Criteria for Written Report in A-Level Project Work

Criteria	Quality expressed in three performance bands
Substantiation of Ideas	Extent to which main ideas are supported by relevant details and examples
Generation of ideas	Extent to which ideas are modified and/or developed
Analysis and evaluation of ideas	Extent to which ideas are analysed and evaluated
Organisation of ideas	Extent to which ideas are presented and organised coherently

Oral Skills in Language Subjects

Singapore's identity as a multi-racial and multi-lingual society finds expression in its education policy on bilingualism. Notably, the policy requires all students to learn two languages, i.e. English Language and their Mother Tongue Language (MTL), namely Chinese, Malay and Tamil Languages. English is used as the medium of instruction and learning for nearly all content subjects² while the MTLs are mainly taught and learnt as language subjects.

For both English Language and MTL, oral communication is assessed as one of the four components in the examination (the other three components are writing, reading and listening). Typically, the oral examination comprises two tasks: first, reading aloud (or oral presentation for A-Level MTL) and second, spoken interaction where candidates will engage in an oral discussion with two examiners 'live' on a topic based on a visual stimulus. Starting with A-Level MTL in 2014, short video clips replace pictures as oral test stimuli as videos can better portray real-life situations and provide more authentic contexts for oral discussion.

Like A-Level Project Work, the assessment of oral skills in Language subjects is also referenced to explicit sets of performance criteria aligned to the learning outcomes. For example, for A-Level MTL, the oral discussion task requires candidates to give a personal response to the visual stimulus, develop ideas in a clear and coherent manner, express clearly using appropriate vocabulary and sentence patterns, and sustain discussion through exchange of opinions. Table 2 outlines the assessment criteria for the oral discussion task in A-Level MTL assessment. See Appendix B for an example of the oral tasks for A-Level Chinese Language and the assessment rubrics for the oral tasks.

² A small number of content subjects, such as primary level Character and Citizenship Education, are taught using Mother Tongue Languages.

Table 2: Assessment Criteria for Oral Discussion Task in A-Level MTL

Criteria	Quality expressed in four performance bands
Personal response and idea development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Quality of personal responses▪ Clarity and coherence of idea development▪ Expansion of ideas with examples and illustrations▪ Ability to sustain discussion
Language use and fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Range of vocabulary and sentence patterns▪ Quality of pronunciation and intonation▪ Degree of fluency and appropriateness of pace

Making Criterion-Referenced Approach Work

While the notion of assessing against explicit criteria may seem a relatively simple concept, there are however, several challenges in implementing criterion-referenced approach. These include difficulties in articulating clear and appropriate criteria, the subjective interpretations of specified criteria by assessors and the competence of assessors in exercising professional judgement.

- (1) *Specifying Criteria.* Underlying the original philosophy and intent of criterion-referenced assessment is a preoccupation with instruction and how best to teach students. Consequently, specific learning outcomes are delineated to facilitate instruction. To assess the attainment of learning outcomes, criteria are specified. Close alignment between the criteria and learning outcomes as well as the larger curricular aims will work towards raising the degree of evidence for the valid interpretation of assessment results.

Let us take A-Level Project Work as an example. The subject seeks to develop in students the ability to integrate knowledge across disciplines or areas of study and apply this knowledge (knowledge application), communicate this knowledge fluently and cogently in oral and written forms (communication), learn to work collaboratively in groups (collaboration) as well as independently (independent learning). These outcomes are intended to support the curricular goal of developing in students essential skills and dispositions needed to function in a globalised economy. Of the four learning outcomes, knowledge application and communication are assessed in the summative examination. Criteria are specified and described to measure the attainment of these outcomes. These criteria must assess constructs closely aligned with the intended outcomes. For instance, the specified constructs for effective oral communication in Project Work involve the ability to speak fluently and clearly, show personal engagement with the audience and provide relevant, well thought-out and elaborated response to questions.

The difficulties associated with establishing clear and appropriate assessment criteria have been pointed out by various authors such as Sadler (1987, 2005), Hambleton (1994) and Popham (2014). Popham (2014), for example, spells out that one key challenge in specifying criteria is determining the level of descriptive

details needed to enhance measurement objectivity and clarity of communication. The description should be 'Goldilocks'-like, neither too brief nor too detailed. If it is too brief, it is likely to lead to misinterpretation and may not guide instruction and assessment. If it is too detailed, the assessment will become unwieldy due to the large number of criteria needed. Sadler (2005) further cautions that the key objectives may become atomistic and when expressed as distinct outcomes, the integrated knowledge and skills that students are supposed to learn can recede into the background.

For A-Level Project Work in Singapore, two small-scale trials and three full-scale field tests mirroring the live examination were conducted in the five years leading up to the first examination in 2003. Similarly, trials and field tests were conducted for oral skills assessments before large scale implementation. These trials and field tests yielded useful information from teachers to help fine tune the assessment tasks and the extent of details needed to specify the performance criteria, thereby augmenting validity evidence for the assessment.

In our experience with Project Work, we further found that selecting criteria that can be formally and reliably assessed proved to be another challenge. In the initial conception of the subject, collaboration was assessed. Students were judged against the criteria of teamwork skills, contribution to group cohesion and achievement of group project goals. A group as well as an individual score would be awarded for this criterion. The evidence of collaboration would be gathered via teacher observation, conferencing and group project file. However, it proved to be challenging for teachers who had to grapple with how to credit the efforts contributed by each member towards teamwork. Students and teachers also found documentation for collaboration burdensome as they had to show what they had done as evidence for assessment. Following a review, it was decided that collaboration would only be assessed formatively and that it would not count towards the overall score from 2005 onwards (Chong and Leong, 2014). Since Project Work is a group project involving submission of group report and group presentation, students will need to collaborate and work closely as a team. The removal of formal assessment of collaboration will not compromise the goal attainment of collaboration skills as group work is still an integral part of the Project Work curriculum.

- (2) *Providing Exemplars.* Understanding criteria and the different levels separating one performance standard from another relies heavily on interpretations that are based on experience. For example, in assessing oral skills in a language discussion task, judging whether a candidate's range of vocabulary and sentence patterns used is "good" or "adequate" can be subjective and represents different absolute levels of quality to different users. What is sophisticated vocabulary to one examiner may not be to another!

Another difficulty in judging the quality of students' work is that the compensatory nature of 'weak criterion-referenced' approach allows compensation of weak performance in one aspect with better performance in another (e.g. in oral skills assessment, poor in pronunciation and intonation but good use of vocabulary and sentence patterns, and *vice versa*). Qualitative judgement of uneven performance

is a difficult task because it involves mental aggregation of different performances, but examiners are required to do this when making marking judgements.

To address these challenges, a range of exemplars showing the different performance bands for all the assessment components of Project Work were provided to make the criteria more concrete to teachers. The exemplars were accompanied with annotations to explain the judgement. In the case of Language oral skills assessment, exemplars in the form of audio recordings were given to teachers. While these exemplars are not the standards themselves, they are indicative of them and work together with the verbal descriptions of criteria to specify standards implicitly to teachers. These resources, serving as benchmarks, help to communicate and promulgate the expected standards.

- (3) *Enhancing Capacity.* In practice, arriving at a shared understanding of the inherently subjective nature of criteria and standards among markers requires intensive deliberation, debate and negotiation. Where there are more markers, having a common understanding becomes even more challenging. In assessing subjective performance tasks, teachers' judgments have shown up unreliability including inter-rater discrepancies and inconsistencies of rating over time. In our experience, extensive training was needed to familiarise teachers with the constructs of Project Work and Language oral skills assessments. A one-off training was perceived by teachers to be of limited value. Beyond the training, the instructional leaders (e.g. heads of department and senior teachers) play an active role in guiding their teachers in assessing students' work. Our schools have also increasingly emplaced their own processes to maintain standards such as using the benchmarks to conduct additional training for new teacher-assessors.

Prior to the marking of examination scripts, standardisation exercise is conducted to familiarise teachers with the criteria and to enhance their competence and confidence in applying the rubrics consistently. Standardisation benchmarks are used by the markers for sample marking. This process allows teachers to discuss and clarify their interpretations of the quality of the assessed work, enhances their understanding of how the criteria are applied and how the standards are used, and boosts their level of confidence and competence. In the standardisation exercise, it is important for teachers to understand the meaning of the criteria, their links to the learning outcomes, and to the assessment task.

- (4) *Ensuring Quality.* As part of the assurance of assessment quality, a pair of examiners who have attended the standardisation exercise assesses each student for the 'live' Language oral examination. They would first assess the student's oral performance independently and then decide on the final score through a consensus discussion. For Project Work, the internal school moderation using the approach set by the examining agency is conducted. External moderation is in turn conducted by the examining agency. The purpose of external moderation is to bring the assessment across schools to the same standards to meet public expectation of 'fairness' – that no school is either too lenient or too severe in its assessment. The approach for internal and external moderation is essentially similar.

Let us illustrate the process for external moderation using Project Work. Following the submission of the internal school assessment marks, the examining agency would identify a range of samples covering different performance mark range for the assessment components which each school has to submit for external moderation. The external moderators, led by the Chief Moderator, then select live exemplar materials which match the benchmarks and prepare commentaries for use during standardisation meeting with external moderators. At the standardisation meeting, the moderators will come to an agreement on the scores that should be awarded for the exemplars and discuss why these marks should be awarded so that everyone is clear about the standard before the moderation begins. Thereafter, the moderators will apply the agreed standards to the scripts allocated. Where a school assessment is deemed too lenient or strict, the external moderation will bring the marks back in line with the national standards.

Singapore's National Examinations: Ensuring Quality Assessment

In Singapore, criterion-referenced approach is seen as most appropriate for assessing the demonstration of key skills and knowledge in coursework, like those of Project Work, and oral skills in languages. Popham (2014) reminds us that criterion-referenced approach was born out of and preoccupied with instruction. The approach allows the skills and knowledge to be tied down to target instruction. Thus, it is not surprising that over time, with good teaching, guidance and practice, referencing the performance assessment to criteria would naturally result in improved performance before stabilising, as is the case with our Project Work experience.

For high-stakes examinations, teaching to the test (or criteria) is common and grade inflation can occur. For example, Wikström (2005) reported that the increase in grade point averages in Swedish upper secondary schools could be attributed to grade inflation. This grade inflation was most likely an effect of the leniency in the grading system in combination with pressure for high-stakes examination as the grades are used for higher education placement.

Several education systems such as Australia (Department of Education and Child Development, South Australia, 2012) and New Zealand (Ministry of Education, New Zealand, 2010) and examination boards such as Cambridge International Examinations (2008) and Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2012) have introduced standards-referenced approach to assess and report students' achievements. This approach, outlined by Sadler (1987), builds upon criterion-referencing, but instead of referencing achievement to a myriad of behaviours, the achievement is judged against predetermined standards of performance. It allows for performance relative to standards to be measured and monitored over time so long as the assessment tasks are carefully designed and closely linked to the learning outcomes specified in the curriculum being assessed. 'Standard' here refers to a definite level of excellence or attainment. It should be distinguished from criterion which is a characteristic by which quality can be judged, but by itself, cannot be standard. Unlike criterion-referenced assessment where the focus is on the criteria, "leaving the standards to be implied or experienced incidentally", standards-

referenced approach allows for “the appreciation of quality, set against a background of external standards” (Sadler, 1987, p.190). As the distribution of grades is not pre-set, it is theoretically possible for all students to reach the achievement standard although in practice this is unlikely because in standard setting, “decision is strongly influenced by what the norms are, or have been in the past” (Elley, as cited in Tognolini & Stanley, 2007, p.132), that is, norms generally underpin standards.

Which approach is used in Singapore system? Broadly speaking, our assessment and reporting of student achievements in Singapore are largely referenced to ‘Standards’. Judgment on student achievements is based on a compendium of evidence including professional judgement from examiners such as the difficulty level of examinations, quality of student responses as well as statistical information to decide the threshold for a particular grade so as to maintain standards from year to year. Even in coursework subjects or components like oral skills assessment which are assessed against explicit criteria, the performance criteria articulate implicitly the quality of work expected, or ‘standards’. Angoff (1974) puts it aptly:

“...we should be aware of the fact that lurking behind the criterion-referenced evaluation, perhaps even responsible for it, is the norm-referenced evaluation” (p. 3).

To make the ‘criteria’ concrete to users, the marking of these subjects or components is further augmented by structured processes such as standardisation and moderation as well as the use of benchmarks with the intent to promulgate standards. More importantly, all the assessment tasks are carefully developed in strict adherence to an approved test blueprint by a team of experienced examiners well versed with the curricular content and assessment considerations. Maintaining standards of assessment is indeed of utmost importance in Singapore education system as assessment information is used for high-stakes decisions, be it, for certification of achievements or course placement. Without quality assessment tasks and processes, we cannot have quality assessment data; without quality assessment data, we cannot make quality decisions, though we need to be cognizant that assessments do have inherent limitations.

Conclusion: Creating a Positive Educational Experience

In Singapore, examination has been an integral part of our education landscape. Examination has been instrumental in bringing us to where we are today in terms of ensuring that our students have a strong foundation in the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy for progression and future learning. Examination is not ‘the be all and end all’. It, however, will continue to be an important part of the system - to provide the assessment to help each child plan the next step of his education journey that is best for him given his current pace of development, and to enable our teachers and schools to provide the appropriate educational support for each child, so as to bring out the best in every child (Heng, 2014). To this end, priority is placed on ensuring that examination is grounded on key assessment principles – that it is valid, reliable and fair. Having valid, reliable and fair examination is also important for local and international recognition of our qualifications.

To ensure validity, examination needs to be aligned to the key curriculum intent and purposes. It should assess the critical abilities articulated in the curriculum. The assessment tasks should be educationally valuable that teachers see the intrinsic value of developing such critical skills in students for use in the real world. To achieve this, our syllabus development committees bring together curriculum specialists from the education ministry, assessment specialists from the examining agency and school teachers to conceptualize and develop the teaching and examination syllabuses. These committees attend to alignment between curricular outcomes and assessment even at the onset of the syllabus conceptualisation. For example, e-examination starting with the Mother Tongue Languages was implemented to ensure alignment of assessment with the increasing use of information and communication technology in teaching and learning and everyday life. This change in assessment mode has created positive outcomes in the teaching and learning of Mother Tongues Languages (Yee, Yim, Chua & Lim, 2014). Similarly, in Project Work, there was positive and encouraging feedback from institutes of higher learning that the subject has led to students' acquisition of the intended outcomes. Some remarks included students' ability to "work out their project proposals" and that they were "more confident especially during oral presentation and discussions". Surely such outcomes must have something to do with what is taking place in the classrooms during Project Work lessons?

Notwithstanding this, examination has also produced some unintended consequences. Examination in Singapore is often blamed for the overly competitive culture, increasing levels of stress in the society and narrowing teaching and learning. The focus has been on attaining the highest grades as the final destination and the education journey is compromised by some teachers teaching to the test and students learning to the test in the bid to obtain the best examination results. Consequently, the enacted curriculum inside the classroom becomes too focused on the tested curriculum in the examination with danger of the broader intended curriculum and the purpose of education being sidelined.

Since 2012, 'student-centric, values-driven' holistic education took centre-stage in the Singapore education system and initiatives to promote lifelong learning such as SkillsFuture³ were implemented. A student-centric education puts the focus on developing the whole person and bringing out the best in each child. At the core are values and character development which are critical to the success of the individual and society. Holistic education, which includes 21st century competencies, is also critical for our students to be future-ready. In tandem with these educational emphases, measures were taken to mitigate the over-emphasis on examination. In 2012, the practice of naming top scorers in examinations ceased and banding of secondary schools based on academic results was abolished. The education ministry aims to engender a change of mindset for the public to see examination merely as a checkpoint in a child's learning journey before the next phase of education rather than the 'be all and end all'.

³SkillsFuture is a national movement launched in 2015 to provide Singaporeans with the opportunities to develop their fullest potential throughout life. The aim is to build a first-rate system of continuing education and training: learning throughout life. It will make the workplace a major site of learning. See <http://www.skillsfuture.sg/>

Like Finland, Singapore has a small population. Our unique geographical, historical, political, socio-cultural contexts, however, have produced different educational philosophies and policies and different priorities for curriculum, pedagogy and examination. Notwithstanding this, in considering educational reforms, we share the same goal of bringing out the best in each child. In Singapore, examination has played an instrumental role in promoting positive education outcomes for the past fifty years. Going forward, we will need to continue to review, refine and adapt our examination to ensure that it remains relevant, forward looking and has a right balance in our education system. We will also need to shift mindset about education - that it is about **learning for a purposeful, meaningful and fulfilling life: beyond learning for grades to learning for mastery, beyond learning in school to learning throughout life, and beyond learning for work to learning for life** (Heng, 2015).

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A-LEVEL PROJECT WORK

A. Sample Project Task

Task	Task Requirements
Risk	<p data-bbox="395 430 448 461"><u>Aim</u></p> <p data-bbox="395 495 1406 562">This project task encourages you to look at the idea of risk and then show how risk-taking might affect people.</p> <p data-bbox="395 595 655 627"><u>Task Requirements</u></p> <ul data-bbox="395 660 1406 864" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="395 660 1406 763">• Choose one example of risk-taking (in history, business, environmental studies, science, etc.) and analyse the positive and negative effects which resulted from the actions taken. <li data-bbox="395 797 1406 864">• Suggest how lessons learned might be used to guide similar risk-taking in the future by individuals and/or groups.

B. Examples of Project Topics

A project task like 'Risk' allows students to engage in many different topics.

E.g. Going Green in Business - Some students chose to apply the lessons learned from a successful risk-taking business venture to manage risks associated with the introduction of this less commonly adopted approach to business.

E.g. Development of Nuclear Energy – Some students chose to apply the lessons learned from the successful development and use of nuclear energy in a country to manage the risks associated with the introduction of this new form of alternative energy in Singapore.

E.g. Open Immigration Policy – Some students chose to apply the lessons learned from the successful implementation of an initially unpopular but eventually beneficial policy in Singapore or other countries to manage the risks associated with the introduction of this potentially contentious policy.

A Specific Example: One group produced a project titled "Disabled Still Enabled". In this project, the group developed a series of strategies to integrate the disabled into the workplace in Singapore. In view of the largely non-accepting behaviour of Singaporeans towards the disabled at workplace, the group viewed the task of integrating the disabled into Singapore workplace as being risky, that is, the risk of not being able to change the mind-set of Singaporeans towards the disabled.

In the project, students demonstrated the intended learning outcome of knowledge application and integration. Learning points were obtained from the successful Yellow Ribbon Project (YRP) in Singapore and applied to their project targeting the disabled. The YRP aims to bring about societal acceptance of ex-offenders and their families. The group likened the disabled to the ex-offenders in that they are both stigmatised minority groups in the society and both face difficulties integrating into the society. Drawing on valuable lessons

from the YRP case study, the group proposed key strategies to promote the integration of disabled people in the workplace and eventually, integration in the society.

The project was also critically evaluated for feasibility. For example, it considered cost as a factor deterring companies from employing disabled workers, and made suggestion on how government grants could be tapped to support companies that are keen to employ the disabled.

C. Assessment Rubrics

Written Report

Criterion	Approaching Expectation	Meeting Expectation	Exceeding Expectation
Substantiation of Ideas	Main ideas are supported by few relevant details and examples	Main ideas are supported by relevant details and examples	Main ideas are well supported by relevant details and examples
Generation of ideas	Ideas are largely rehashed with little or no modification	Ideas are appropriately modified and/or developed	Ideas are insightful and/or innovative
Analysis and evaluation of ideas	Ideas are analysed and evaluated in a limited way	Ideas are sufficiently analysed and evaluated	Ideas are thoroughly analysed and evaluated
Organisation of ideas	Ideas are presented and organised in such a way that the report is difficult to follow	Ideas are presented and organised in such a way that the report is easy to follow	Ideas are presented and organised coherently

Oral Presentation

Criterion	Approaching Expectation	Meeting Expectation	Exceeding Expectation
<i>Individual</i>			
Fluency and clarity of speech	Speaks haltingly and/or mumbles, and is difficult to understand at times	Speaks clearly and intelligibly most of the time	Speaks clearly and fluently throughout, at an appropriate pace
Awareness of audience	Shows little awareness of audience	Shows some awareness of audience	Shows personal engagement with audience
Response to questions	Answers are limited with little or no elaboration	Answers are relevant and contain some elaboration of ideas	Answers are relevant, well thought out and elaborated on
<i>Group</i>			
Effectiveness of group presentation	Presentation has limited effect due to lack of cohesion and organisation. Presentation aids do not enhance the presentation	Presentation is generally effective with some degree of cohesion and organisation. Presentation aids used appropriately to enhance presentation	Presentation is highly effective, cohesive and well-organised. Presentation aids used to effectively enhance overall effect

Group Project File

Criterion	Approaching Expectation	Meeting Expectation	Exceeding Expectation
Generation of ideas	Ideas are largely rehashed with little or no modification	Ideas are appropriately modified and/or developed	Ideas are insightful and/or innovative
Analysis and evaluation of ideas	Ideas are analysed and evaluated in a limited way	Ideas are sufficiently analysed and evaluated	Ideas are thoroughly analysed and evaluated

A-LEVEL CHINESE LANGUAGE ORAL EXAMINATION

A-Level Chinese Language oral examination comprises two tasks: oral presentation where candidates will deliver a ‘not more than 2-minutes’ presentation based on a given topic and spoken interaction where candidates will engage in a discussion with two examiners on a topic based on a video stimulus. On the day of oral examination, each candidate will be given 10 minutes to prepare for the presentation task and to watch the video clip for the oral discussion task. Each candidate will be examined by a pair of oral examiners.

A. Key Assessment Objectives

Task 1: Oral presentation	Task 2: Oral discussion based on video stimulus
<p>Candidates should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Speak clearly and fluently to suit purpose, audience, context and culture 2. Present well-organised ideas, viewpoints and arguments supported with evidence/supporting details 	<p>Candidates should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give a personal response to the visual stimuli <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop ideas in a clear and coherent manner ▪ Express viewpoints using a good range of appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures 2. Engage in a sustained conversation through exchange of opinions/ideas with the examiners

B. Sample Tasks

Task 1: Oral presentation

Choose one of the topics below and deliver an oral presentation of not more than 2 minutes.

- (1) 一部电影要吸引观众，主角一定要长得好看。试谈谈你的看法。
(The lead actors in movies must be good looking in order to attract the audience.)
- (2) 媒体有权报道名人的私生活。试谈谈你的看法。
(The media has the right to report on the private lives of celebrities.)

Task 2: Oral discussion based on a video stimulus

Video stimulus: A one-minute video on activities in a library



提示 (Prompts)

1. 如果你是录像中到图书馆的其中一位年轻人，你会从中得到什么益处？
(If you were one of the teenagers in the video who went to the library, how would you have benefitted?)
2. 图书馆是如何满足使用者的不同需求？
(How do libraries cater to the different needs of library users?)
3. 我们既然可以轻易地通过资讯科技获得所需的资讯，我们就不再需要图书馆了。你同意这个看法吗？为什么？
(Information is easily accessible through Information Technology and thus we do not need libraries. Do you agree? Why?)

C. Assessment Rubrics

Task 1: Oral presentation

Level	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4
Fluency and clarity of speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Speaks clearly and fluently throughout ▪ Speaks with good and accurate pronunciation throughout; sentence intonation is natural and expressive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Speaks clearly and fluently most of the time ▪ Speaks with good pronunciation mostly; sentence intonation is natural 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Speaks with some hesitation that does not interfere with clarity of presentation ▪ Speaks with some difficulties in pronunciation and/or sentence intonation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Speaks haltingly and/or mumbles, and is difficult to understand at times ▪ Speaks with major errors in pronunciation with awkward sentence intonation
Organisation and relevance of ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives relevant and well-organised ideas with the main points highlighted and supported with evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gives relevant ideas, mostly expressed in an organised manner with the mainpoints highlighted and supported with some evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gives relevant ideas expressed with some organisation and some attempt to highlight the main points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hardly able to give relevant ideas; ideas, if any, are poorly organised

Task 2: Oral discussion based on a video stimulus

Level	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4
Personal Response & Idea Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides well-considered personal responses on the topic ▪ Develops ideas clearly and coherently ▪ Able to expand ideas with examples / illustrations ▪ Can sustain conversation throughout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides thoughtful personal responses on the topic ▪ Develops most ideas clearly and coherently ▪ Able to expand most ideas with examples / illustrations ▪ Can sustain conversation most of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides simple personal responses on the topic ▪ Develops some ideas fairly clearly and coherently ▪ Able to expand some ideas with examples / illustrations ▪ Can sustain conversation some of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hardly able to provide personal responses on the topic ▪ Hardly able to develop ideas ▪ Unable to expand most of the ideas ▪ Hardly able to sustain the conversation
Language Use & Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uses a good range of appropriate vocabulary and varied sentence patterns ▪ Speaks well with very good pronunciation and appropriate intonation ▪ Fluent and well- paced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uses an adequate range of appropriate vocabulary and common sentence patterns ▪ Speaks with good pronunciation and appropriate intonation ▪ Generally fluent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uses basic, sometimes inappropriate vocabulary and simple sentence patterns ▪ Speaks with some errors in pronunciation and/or sentence intonation ▪ Fairly hesitant in speaking with many inappropriate pauses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uses a basic, sometimes inappropriate vocabulary and sentence patterns ▪ Speaks with errors in pronunciation and/or awkward intonation ▪ Speak haltingly with inappropriate pauses