



Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board



**CAMBRIDGE**  
International Education

**Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate of Education  
Advanced Level Higher 2 (2027)**

# **China Studies in English (Syllabus 9628)**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The China Studies in English (CSE) curriculum focuses on studying developments in contemporary China from circa 2000 to the present day through an examination of its economy, politics, society and international relations. The curriculum aims to equip students with relevant knowledge on contemporary developments in China, develop their critical thinking and information literacy to understand these developments, and instil in them an awareness of the regional and global implications of China's rise. It also seeks to develop China-conversant citizens who can appreciate Singapore's interests and perspectives in its engagement with China, contribute in their own capacity to further Singapore-China interactions and harness the dynamic opportunities that China can offer. To this end, the curriculum seeks to achieve the following student outcomes:

- (a) A China-conversant individual who is knowledgeable about contemporary developments in China and sensitive to China's context;
- (b) A critical thinker who exercises sound reasoning through considering different perspectives and using evidence to understand complex issues in contemporary China;
- (c) A globally aware individual who appreciates regional and global issues and trends through the study of China's role as a regional and global actor; and
- (d) An information-literate individual who accesses, analyses, evaluates and uses different types of information about contemporary China critically and effectively.

## 1.1 FEATURES OF THE CURRICULUM



**Content Dimensions and Key Issues (Inner Ring)**

The curriculum aims to develop students' understanding of contemporary China across the content dimensions of China's economy, politics, society and international relations. These four content dimensions provide the essential knowledge domains to develop a multi-disciplinary understanding of contemporary China.

The H2 CSE syllabus covers the four dimensions through the study of four Key Issues – China's economic development and its sustainability, governing China and its challenges, Chinese society and its transformation, and China's foreign policy and its implications. Each issue is foregrounded by one dimension. In the course of studying these Key Issues, students will have opportunities to connect knowledge from different dimensions to understand the complexity of issues in contemporary China.

**Issues-based Approach (Middle Ring)**

The Issues-based Approach is the core pedagogical framework for CSE. Studying contemporary China through issues encourages the use of constructivist pedagogies such as inquiry-based learning to guide students in identifying inquiry questions, exploring different perspectives, gathering evidence and reaching reasoned conclusions. The Issues-based Approach engages students in adopting multi-disciplinary and conceptual lenses to study the Key Issues, exercising critical thinking skills to evaluate and synthesise multiple perspectives and using information literacy to interpret and evaluate different sources of information.

**21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes (Outer Ring)**

The curriculum is aligned with MOE's Framework for 21st Century Competencies (21CC) and Student Outcomes. Students have opportunities to hone their critical thinking by considering different perspectives and evaluating evidence to understand complex issues in contemporary China. The study of China's domestic developments and its international relations in CSE helps students appreciate the interconnections between China, Asia and the wider world from a Singapore perspective, and supports the development of students' global awareness and cross-cultural skills. In the course of studying contemporary China, the exposure to different sources of information allows students to develop information literacy in accessing, analysing, evaluating and using different types of information critically and effectively.

## 2 AIMS

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H2 China Studies in English (CSE) aims to develop students' understanding of contemporary China by encouraging them to:

- (a) examine key issues related to contemporary China's economic, political and social developments, and its international relations;
- (b) develop skills in the selection, application, analysis and evaluation of information related to contemporary China;
- (c) develop skills in evaluating and synthesising multiple perspectives to arrive at an informed judgement of issues related to contemporary China and to make well-considered recommendations to address these issues; and
- (d) communicate substantiated arguments on key issues about contemporary China in a clear and well-structured manner.

### 3 ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

Candidates are expected to:

#### AO1: Knowledge and Understanding

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of issues and concepts relevant to contemporary China, across the content dimensions of economy, politics, society and international relations

#### AO2: Analysis and Evaluation of Issues

- critically examine issues and developments
- analyse, evaluate and synthesise different perspectives on issues
- construct coherent and well-substantiated arguments
- make judgements and reach conclusions based on reasoned consideration of issues

#### AO3: Interpretation and Evaluation of Information

- interpret, analyse and evaluate different sources of information in response to given issues
- analyse perspectives across different sources
- make judgements and reach conclusions based on evaluation of information
- make well-supported recommendations to address issues

### 4 SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT

#### 4.1 ASSESSMENT MODE

The assessment comprises two papers. Paper 1 (Case Studies) and Paper 2 (Essays). Candidates are required to offer both papers.

Candidates will receive the question papers in hard copy. A digital answer booklet will be provided with each question paper. Candidates are required to type their responses in the digital answer booklet.

#### 4.2 SPECIFICATION GRID

Paper	Description	Assessment Objective	Marks	Overall weighting	Duration
1 (Case Studies)	Candidates answer questions from <b>two</b> compulsory case studies.	AO1 + AO2 + AO3	60 marks	40%	2 hours 45 minutes
	<u>Section A</u> The first case study focuses on interpretation, analysis and evaluation of information. Candidates answer <b>four</b> part-questions based on five sources.		Section A: 35 marks		
	<u>Section B</u> The second case study focuses on analysis, evaluation and making recommendations to address issues. Candidates answer <b>one</b> question based on four sources.		Section B: 25 marks		

Paper	Description	Assessment Objective	Marks	Overall weighting	Duration
2 (Essays)	Candidates answer <b>three</b> questions.	AO1 + AO2	90 marks	60%	2 hours 30 minutes
	<u>Section A</u> Candidates answer <b>one</b> compulsory question on any of the four Key Issues in the syllabus.				
	<u>Section B</u> Candidates answer <b>two</b> questions.  Three questions will be set on any of the four Key Issues in the syllabus.				

Note: AO1 forms part of testing of AO2 and AO3

### 4.3 DESCRIPTION OF COMPONENTS

#### 4.3.1 PAPER 1 (CASE STUDIES)

Candidates are required to answer questions from two compulsory case studies. Each case study will be set on a different Key Issue. In each case study, sources with different perspectives will be provided. The paper will comprise both text and non-text sources (e.g. maps, photographs, diagrams, graphs, data tables, cartoons and posters). While candidates are required to use their knowledge and understanding of contemporary China to interpret and evaluate these sources, specialised knowledge of other disciplines will not be required.

The first case study will comprise a collection of five sources and no more than four A4 pages in length, on any one of the four Key Issues in the syllabus content. Candidates are required to answer four part-questions that assess the following skills:

- Interpret, explain and analyse different types of information on contemporary China
- Compare perspectives from different sources
- Assess the strengths and limitations of information as evidence
- Synthesise and evaluate information to test a hypothesis

The second case study will comprise a collection of four sources and no more than three A4 pages in length, on any one of the four Key Issues in the syllabus content. Candidates are required to answer one question that assesses the following skills:

- Evaluate views about issues and make well-supported recommendations to address issues

The Case Studies questions will be assessed using a generic levels of response mark scheme, which involves qualitative judgements and awards marks according to the level of skill or understanding in the answer.

For details on the assessment criteria and level descriptors, please refer to Paper 1 (Case Studies) Level Descriptors in Appendix A.

**4.3.2 PAPER 2 (ESSAYS)**

Candidates are required to show depth of knowledge and understanding of issues and concepts relevant to contemporary China in their answers. The answers should demonstrate the ability to analyse issues and developments, evaluate and synthesise perspectives on issues across content dimensions to inform the issues, and present analytical, focused and well-informed arguments and conclusions. Candidates are required to answer the essay questions in continuous prose.

The essays will be assessed using a generic levels of response mark scheme, which involves qualitative rather than quantitative evaluation. Judgements on the appropriate level of each essay assessed will be based on the principle of 'best fit' determined by the descriptors within each level which has several assessment criteria.

For details on the assessment criteria and level descriptors, please refer to Paper 2 (Essays) Level Descriptors in Appendix B.

## 5 SYLLABUS CONTENT

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The syllabus is focused on studying developments in contemporary China from circa 2000 to the present day through an examination of four Key Issues across the content dimensions of China's economy, politics, society and international relations.

The four Key Issues are:

- China's Economic Development and Its Sustainability
- Governing China and Its Challenges
- Chinese Society and Its Transformation
- China's Foreign Policy and Its Implications



Key Issue 1 CHINA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ITS SUSTAINABILITY			
Overview		Connecting the Dimensions	
Since implementing market reforms and the open-door policy from 1978, China has become one of the world's largest economies. China's economic success has contributed to major improvements in the standard of living of its citizens. However, it has led to many challenges, which threaten the sustainability of its economic development. The traditional drivers of China's economic growth, i.e. dependence on export-oriented industrialisation and rapid growth of labour, have also waned in importance. To address these challenges, the Chinese government has embarked on a reformulation of China's developmental trajectory as it seeks to sustain the country's economic development.		To understand the issues affecting the sustainability of China's economic development, it is essential to consider China's domestic political and social challenges and their impact on economic development. Some of these challenges were the result of the unintended consequences of rapid economic development. How these challenges are managed would affect the degree to which China can sustain its economic development. With the Chinese economy closely intertwined with the global economy, China's foreign policy will continue to play a vital role in securing China's economic interests and sustaining China's economic development.	
Learning Outcomes	Content (Dimension: Economy)		
Through the study of this issue, students will be able to discuss the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Features of China's economic development</li><li>• Challenges to China's economic sustainability</li><li>• Effectiveness of China's approaches to economic sustainability</li></ul>	Features of China's economic development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• China's transition from centrally planned economy to socialist market economy</li><li>• Drivers of economic growth<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Economic reforms</li><li>– Trade and investment levels</li></ul></li></ul>	Challenges to China's economic sustainability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Structural issues<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Dependence on export-oriented industries</li><li>– Inefficiency of state-owned enterprises (SOEs)</li><li>– Banking debt</li></ul></li><li>• Regional and local disparities</li><li>• Energy and environmental issues<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Dependence on fossil fuels</li><li>– Environmental degradation</li></ul></li></ul>	Effectiveness of China's approaches to economic sustainability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Economic restructuring<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Increase in domestic consumption</li><li>– Reform of SOEs</li><li>– Expansion of technological and services sectors</li><li>– Reform of banks</li></ul></li><li>• Developing poorer regions<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Infrastructural and industrial development</li><li>– Urbanisation</li></ul></li><li>• Promoting green development<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Development of renewable energy</li><li>– Environmental protection</li></ul></li></ul>
Key Concepts			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Economic development</li><li>• Economic growth</li><li>• Economic sustainability</li><li>• Economic liberalisation</li></ul>			

Key Issue 2 GOVERNING CHINA AND ITS CHALLENGES			
Overview		Connecting the Dimensions	
China's post-Maoist political system has remained stable due to its adaptability in responding to changing political, economic and social conditions. Political stability is derived from a combination of the party-state system's responsiveness to the people's socio-economic needs and its authoritarian features. There is growing awareness that for political stability to endure and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to remain relevant, political reforms within the party-state system such as anti-corruption and the rule of law must continue to deliver effective governance. In addition, the party-state system's capacity to deliver sustained economic development and respond to the needs of different social groups remains key to the maintenance of political stability.		To examine the stability of China's political system, there is a need to explore the impact of social and economic transformation on political stability. These changes will test the capacity of the party-state system to manage public needs, implement political, social and economic reforms, and deliver effective governance. The need to maintain political stability also shapes China's foreign policy in supporting domestic economic growth and addressing nationalist sentiments, which will in turn affect the continued relevance and stability of the party-state system.	
Learning Outcome	Content (Dimension: Politics)		
Through the study of this issue, students will be able to discuss the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Features of China's political system</li><li>Challenges to China's political stability</li><li>Effectiveness of China's approaches to political stability</li></ul>	Features of China's political system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Party-state system</li><li>Ideological and performance-based sources of legitimacy</li><li>Central-local relations</li></ul>	Challenges to China's political stability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Governance<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Corruption</li><li>Rule of law</li><li>Responsiveness to public needs</li><li>Ethnic minority issues</li></ul></li><li>Governing capacity<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bureaucratic capacity</li><li>Relationship between central and local governments</li></ul></li><li>Political participation<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Political opposition</li><li>Online citizen activism</li></ul></li></ul>	Effectiveness of China's approaches to political stability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Governance<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anti-corruption</li><li>Legal reforms</li><li>Delivery of services</li><li>Management of ethnic minority groups</li></ul></li><li>Governing capacity<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reform of party and state institutions</li><li>Management of central-local relations</li></ul></li><li>Managing political participation<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>State-sponsored participation mechanisms</li><li>Surveillance and censorship</li></ul></li></ul>
Key Concepts			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Political stability</li><li>Governance</li><li>Political legitimacy</li><li>Ideology</li></ul>			

Key Issue 3 CHINESE SOCIETY AND ITS TRANSFORMATION			
Overview		Connecting the Dimensions	
Decades of rapid economic modernisation and globalisation have led to an astounding transformation of Chinese society. Changes to China’s demographics and social structure have resulted in a wide range of social issues. In response, the Chinese government has embarked on strengthening social governance as it seeks to manage the impact of social change. Chinese society today has also become more complex and diversified, with shifts in social values and beliefs. This places more pressure on the Chinese government to engage a growing civil society and manage social diversity. Working towards harmonious state-society relations is key to ensuring China’s social stability.		To understand Chinese society, it is necessary to consider the economic and political developments taking place within China and China’s relations with the world. This is because much of the social transformation taking place within China can be traced to economic modernisation, state policies and the impact of globalisation. Similarly, it is also important to understand the impact of social transformation in shaping the challenges of political stability and economic sustainability, and the Chinese government’s responses to them.	
Learning Outcomes	Content (Dimension: Society)		
Through the study of this issue, students will be able to discuss the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Aspects of China’s social change</li><li>Challenges of China’s social change</li><li>Effectiveness of China’s approaches to manage social change</li></ul>	Aspects of China’s social change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Demographic changes<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Declining birth rate</li><li>Increase in life expectancy</li></ul></li><li>Urbanisation and rural-urban migration</li><li>Changes in social structure<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increased social stratification</li><li>Changes in family structure</li></ul></li></ul>	Challenges of China’s social change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Demographic issues<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Impact of population policies</li><li>Ageing population</li></ul></li><li>Social mobility issues<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Income and regional disparities</li><li>Social inequalities</li></ul></li><li>Growing civil society<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)</li><li>Social movements</li></ul></li><li>Diverse social values and beliefs<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Religious revival</li><li>Impact of media on traditional values</li></ul></li></ul>	Effectiveness of China’s approaches to manage social change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reform of social governance<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Changes in population policies</li><li>Provision of social security, social assistance and social welfare</li><li>Household registration system (<i>hukou</i>)</li><li>Management of NGOs</li></ul></li><li>Managing social order<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Use of ideology</li><li>Regulation of religious organisations</li><li>Management of media</li></ul></li></ul>
Key Concepts			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Social change</li><li>Social stability</li><li>Social governance</li><li>Civil society</li></ul>			

Key Issue 4 CHINA’S FOREIGN POLICY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS			
Overview		Connecting the Dimensions	
China’s emergence as a global player has given way to a more assertive international posture. With growing international concerns regarding the direction of China’s foreign policy, the Chinese leadership has maintained its commitment towards peaceful development, notwithstanding its military spending, more aggressive territorial claims and increased global presence. Furthermore, China has begun to play a larger role in global governance through participation in international institutions and multilateral arrangements. As a rising major power, China’s foreign policy acquires an increasing global significance, making it critical to understand the factors that shape it, its implications for regional and international stability, and its future trajectory.		To understand the trajectory of China’s foreign policy, it is necessary to consider domestic developments in relation to external circumstances. China’s actions on the global stage are increasingly influenced by domestic political and economic developments and public opinion. A consideration of linkages between China’s domestic conditions and its foreign policy will contribute to a deeper appreciation of the motivations behind China’s foreign policy and its impact on China’s national interests.	
Learning Outcomes	Content (Dimension: International Relations)		
Through the study of this issue, students will be able to discuss the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Factors shaping China’s foreign policy</li><li>China’s bilateral relations with the US, Japan and ASEAN, and their implications for China’s national interests</li><li>China’s role in global governance and its implications for China’s global influence</li></ul>	Factors shaping China’s foreign policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>National interests<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sovereignty and territorial integrity</li><li>Security interests</li><li>Economic interests</li></ul></li><li>Ideology</li></ul>	China’s bilateral relations and their implications for China’s national interests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>China-US relations<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bilateral trade and investments</li><li>Geopolitical issues</li></ul></li><li>China-Japan relations<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bilateral trade and investments</li><li>Security issues</li></ul></li><li>China’s relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Regional economic cooperation</li><li>Regional security issues</li></ul></li></ul>	China’s role in global governance and its implications for China’s global influence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>International economy<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>International economic institutions</li><li>Multilateral trade arrangements</li></ul></li><li>International security<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Regional security cooperation</li><li>United Nations (UN)</li></ul></li><li>Environment and climate change<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Participation in international environmental cooperation</li><li>Participation in international climate change cooperation</li></ul></li></ul>
Key Concepts			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sovereignty</li><li>Security</li><li>Conflict</li><li>Cooperation</li></ul>			

## 6 APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A – PAPER 1 (CASE STUDIES) LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

#### Section A – Case Study 1

Q1(a) = 6 marks

Level	Marks	Level descriptors
Level 3	5–6	Response explains two factors/issues in context.
Level 2	3–4	Response explains one factor/issue in context.
Level 1	1–2	Response describes one or more factor/issue.
Level 0	0	No creditable response.

Q1(b) = 9 marks

Level	Marks	Level descriptors
Level 3	7–9	Response analyses how far the sources are similar and different, supported by source content and contextual knowledge.
Level 2	4–6	Response explains how the sources are similar or different, supported by source content and/or contextual knowledge.
Level 1	1–3	Response describes, paraphrases or directly quotes from the source(s) without any comparative comments.
Level 0	0	No creditable response.

Q1(c) = 8 marks

Level	Marks	Level descriptors
Level 3	6–8	Response assesses the strengths and limitations of the source in relation to the question, using contextual knowledge and/or other source(s).
Level 2	3–5	Response explains the strengths and/or limitations of the source in relation to the question, using source content and provenance.
Level 1	1–2	Response accepts the source at face value or describes the content in relation to the question.
Level 0	0	No creditable response.

Q1(d) = 12 marks

Level	Marks	Level descriptors
Level 3	9–12	Response evaluates all the sources and uses contextual knowledge to reach a supported judgement about the degree to which the sources support the given view. Towards the bottom of the level, responses may be less well-developed.
Level 2	5–8	Response evaluates the sources in relation to the question. There may be attempts to use contextual knowledge for source evaluation but the quality of evaluation may be uneven.
Level 1	1–4	Response describes the content of the sources in relation to the question.
Level 0	0	No creditable response.

**Section B – Case Study 2**

Q2 = 25 marks

Level	Marks	Level descriptors
Level 5	21–25	Response thoroughly evaluates the issue, using all the sources and contextual knowledge, makes recommendations and develops explanations about how and why these recommendations can result in improvements. Towards the top of the level, responses will provide a thorough evaluation of the issue and a detailed assessment of the likelihood of success of the recommendations. Towards the bottom of the level, the link between the recommendations and the evaluation of the issue may be implicit.
Level 4	16–20	Response evaluates the issue, using the sources and contextual knowledge, and makes recommendations. Towards the top of the level, recommendations will be more fully developed. Towards the bottom of the level, the quality of evaluation of the issue may be uneven, and recommendations will not be fully developed.
Level 3	11–15	Response makes a limited evaluation of the issue, using the sources and contextual knowledge. Towards the top of the level, recommendations will be made but may be undeveloped. Towards the bottom of the level, there will be no recommendations.
Level 2	6–10	Response explains the issue, using the sources or contextual knowledge.
Level 1	1–5	Response describes the issue, using the sources or contextual knowledge.
Level 0	0	No creditable response.

**APPENDIX B – PAPER 2 (ESSAYS) LEVEL DESCRIPTORS**

Level	Marks	Level descriptors
Level 5	25–30	<p>Responses are consistently analytical and clearly focused on the demands of the question. They show a thorough understanding of the issues in the question. The argument is balanced and well-supported by relevant factual material. The response is coherent and convincing, well-structured and fully developed. A clearly supported judgement about the question is reached, showing synthesis of different perspectives. Relevant dimensions will be considered in a sustained manner.</p> <p>Towards the top of the level, responses are expected to be analytical, focused and coherent throughout with critical evaluation of different perspectives and a clear judgement in response to the question. Towards the bottom of the level, responses might not show all of these characteristics in equal measure, but will still be well-argued.</p>
Level 4	19–24	<p>Responses are analytical and largely focused on the demands of the question. They show a very good understanding of the issues in the question. The argument is largely balanced and supported with relevant factual material. The response is largely coherent and convincing, clearly structured and developed. A largely supported judgement about the question is reached, showing consideration of different perspectives. Relevant dimensions will be considered.</p> <p>Towards the top of the level, responses are expected to be analytical, focused and coherent, and to consider a range of perspectives critically. Judgements are largely supported. Towards the bottom of the level, the argument might be less convincing or less well-supported.</p>
Level 3	13–18	<p>Responses are often analytical and have a degree of focus on the demands of the question. They show a good understanding of the issues in the question. The argument may be unbalanced and supported with some factual material. The response may be unevenly developed and lack some coherence. There will be some kind of judgement with some support, showing some consideration of different perspectives. There may be some consideration of relevant dimensions.</p> <p>Towards the top of the level, responses contain relevant factual material. They are likely to be largely analytical and focused. There will be some recognition that there is a range of different perspectives. Judgements will be attempted. Towards the bottom of the level, the argument may be less coherent and there may be some description rather than analysis of the perspectives.</p>
Level 2	7–12	<p>Responses may have some analysis and may be aimed at the demands of the question. They show some understanding of the issues in the question. The argument may be undeveloped and supported with limited factual material. The response may lack clarity and coherence. The response describes different perspectives, and the judgements may be assertions with insufficient support. Relevant dimensions may not be considered.</p> <p>Towards the top of the level, responses are likely to have a degree of analysis and to address the question directly. Towards the bottom of the level, responses are likely to show limited understanding of the issues in the question and to lack development.</p>
Level 1	1–6	<p>Responses will not be focused on the demands of the question. They will not show understanding of the issues in the question. The argument may be disjointed and lack clarity, with irrelevant factual material. The response may be brief or in note form. The response describes some perspectives and does not reach a judgement. Relevant dimensions are not considered.</p> <p>Towards the top of the level, responses may make a few valid points. Towards the bottom of the level, responses will fulfil very few of the demands of the question.</p>
Level 0	0	No creditable response.