



CHINESE: BACKGROUND LANGUAGE

ATAR course

Year 11 and 12 syllabus – What’s changing: Rationale and Aims

For teaching in 2027

Acknowledgement of Country

Kaya. The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) acknowledges that our offices are on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar and that we deliver our services on the country of many traditional custodians and language groups throughout Western Australia. The Authority acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We offer our respect to Elders past and present.

Background

As part of the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Refreshment for reviewing the nomenclature of courses, the Authority has updated the rationale and aims of each syllabus.

The revised rationale and aims are aligned with the mapping of the general capabilities to provide clear connections between the rationale, aims and syllabus content. The rationale outlines what the subject is about and why it is important. It describes what students can expect to study in the course, along with the knowledge, skills and understandings they will develop throughout the course. It also explains how these can be applied in everyday life and references potential future pathways, outlining how students might connect what they learn in the course to further education, training and employment opportunities.

Important information

WACE Refreshment: Reviewing the nomenclature of courses

This document contains information that will be included in the syllabus effective from 1 January 2026.

Users of the syllabus are responsible for checking its currency.

Syllabuses are formally reviewed by the Authority on a cyclical basis, typically every five years.

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Rationale

The Chinese: Background Language ATAR course connects students with a language spoken by nearly a quarter of the world's population. Communities of Chinese speakers exist not only across mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, but also in almost every country, including well-established communities in South-East Asia, North America and Australia. It is an important language in international commerce, economics and trade, with particular influence in manufacturing, technology, global supply chains and financial services, making Chinese an important language for young Australians to learn during their schooling as Australia progresses towards a future of increased trade and engagement with Asia.

The course is designed for students who acquired the language through immersion or interaction within their environment, such as through family, community, in-country or cultural experiences. Through the course, students consider young people and their relationships, how the traditions and values of Chinese-speaking communities are maintained and the nature of work, including the opportunities afforded bilingual students and how advances in communication technology and changes in expectations affect future study and employment. In addition, students engage with the notion of 'global citizen' and the changing nature of Australian identity.

Students extend and refine their intercultural and linguistic skills in Chinese to communicate confidently in a range of situations. They gain a deeper understanding of the global significance of the Chinese language and culture, fostering a heightened sense of intercultural awareness and empathy. The course provides opportunities for students to engage with diverse texts. Through an ongoing process of interpretation, self-reflection, comparison and negotiation, students refine their language skills and cultural understanding. In Year 12, they apply their language skills and cultural understanding to a personal investigation, where they undertake research, synthesise information from multiple sources and reflect on their chosen area of interest.

Through the course, students engage with the linguistic and cultural diversity of our interconnected world, reflecting on their role in society and how they interact with others across various social contexts. Language learning is a powerful tool for personal growth and broadens students' worldview. Australia's cultural and linguistic diversity provides many opportunities to hear and use Chinese in real-life situations as well as through media, and to make actual and virtual connections with Chinese-speaking communities in the rest of the world.

Australia has strong personal, cultural, political and trade connections with Chinese-speaking countries and students who are proficient in Chinese have enhanced vocational opportunities in a wide range of sectors. Studying Chinese opens pathways for further academic study in fields like languages, international studies, and cross-cultural communication, and careers in areas such as education, business, trade, commerce, diplomacy, journalism, tourism, hospitality and law. Ultimately, the course offers students valuable linguistic and intercultural skills, fosters personal growth and empathy, and enhances future academic and career prospects.

Aims

The Chinese: Background Language ATAR course builds on students' skills and understanding of Chinese and knowledge about the cultures of Chinese-speaking communities. It enables students to:

- interact in spoken Chinese through the exchange of information, ideas and opinions
- process and respond in English or Chinese to texts in Chinese
- compose spoken, written, digital and/or multimodal Chinese texts
- demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of language as a system
- reflect on the relationships between language, culture and identity.