Complete Guide For

CSCA EXAM 2025-2026

Your Roadmap to Studying at
Top Chinese Universities

Introduction

Thinking about studying in China? The process just got clearer—and more competitive. The **China Scholastic Competency Assessment (CSCA)** is transforming how Chinese universities evaluate international applicants. This guide will walk you through everything you need to know.

Whether you're applying for engineering, medicine, arts, or business, understanding the **CSCA** is your first critical step. This guide covers what the exam is, which subjects you need to take, how to prepare, technical requirements, and the timeline you need to follow for a **September 2026** enrollment.

UNDERSTANDING THE GAME-CHANGER

For decades, getting ito a Chinese university as an international student was a confusing, inconsistent process. The main problem was simple: there was no standard way to compare applicants from different countries.
The Problem with the Old System

What is the
CSCA?

The China Scholastic Competency Assessment (CSCA) is a standardized entrance exam for international undergraduates, developed and administered by the China Scholarship Council (CSC). It's designed to measure whether you're ready for university-level study in China, regardless of which country you're from or what education system you came through.

Think of it as **China's** answer to the SAT (in the US), A-Levels (in the UK), or the gaokao **(China's national college entrance exam for domestic students)** a unified benchmark that every university recognizes and trusts.

Key Facts You Need to Know

- First Global Exam: <u>**December 21, 2025**</u>
- Mandatory for 2026 intake: All <u>**Chinese Government Scholarship (CSC)**</u> universities require CSCA scores
- By 2028: Expected to be mandatory for ALL international undergraduate applicants to Chinese universities
- 2026 Schedule: **5 exam sessions per year (January, March, April, June, December)**
- Score Validity: 2 years from the date you take the exam

Why This Matters for You

The CSCA replaces the old document-based system with a transparent, standardized evaluation. This is actually good news for you because:

Fair Evaluation	Clear Expectations	Merit-Based	Global Recognition

- **Fair Evaluation:** You're judged on the same test as everyone else, eliminating the inconsistency of transcript-based comparisons.

- **Clear Expectations:** You know exactly what subjects you need to study, what topics will be tested, and how the exam is structured.

- **Merit-Based:** Strong performance on the CSCA significantly boosts your scholarship chances.

- **Global Recognition:** Your score is recognized by over 2,000 universities across China

1. What is the CSCA? Understanding the Game-Changer

- The CSCA consists of 5 subjects. The key thing to understand: you don't take all 5. You only take the subjects required for your major and language of instruction. Here's the full breakdown:

Subject	Duration	Questions	Language	Who Needs It?
Mathematics	60 min	48 MC	English or Chinese	✓ EVERYONE
Physics	60 min	48 MC	English or Chinese	Engineering, CS, Physical Sciences
Chemistry	60 min	48 MC	English or Chinese	Medicine, Chem. Engineering, Bio Sciences
Humanities Chinese	90 min	80 MC	Chinese Only	Chinese-taught Humanities, Arts, Law, Social Sciences
STEM Chinese	90 min	80 MC	Chinese Only	Chinese-taught Engineering, Medicine

Important: Science, engineering, agriculture, and medical majors typically require at least one of Physics or Chemistry. Always verify with your target university's specific requirements before registering.

3. Which Subjects Should YOU Take?

Your exam subjects depend on two things: (1) your intended major and (2) whether your program is taught in English or Chinese. Here's the breakdown by major category:

Category A: Design, Film & Arts

Includes: Visual Communication, Architecture, Animation, Film Production, Fine Arts, Fashion Design

If You're Studying in Chinese:

- Mathematics (in English or Chinese)
- Humanities Chinese

Why? Mathematics is a national requirement for all degrees. Humanities Chinese proves you can read art history and theory textbooks written in Chinese.

If You're Studying in English:

- Mathematics (in English or Chinese)

Why? You're exempt from Chinese language tests, but Math is still required to prove basic academic logic.

Category B:

- STEM Majors (Engineering, Computer Science, Physics, Mathematics)

Chinese-Taught Programs	English-Taught Programs
- **Mathematics** - **Physics** - **STEM Chinese**	- **Mathematics** - **Physics**

Category C:

- Medicine & Biological Sciences (MBBS, Pharmacy, Biology)

Chinese-Taught Programs	English-Taught Programs
- **Mathematics** - **Physics** - **STEM Chinese**	- **Mathematics** - **Chemistry** - **(Some universities may also require Physics)**

Category D:

- Business & Social Sciences (Economics, Law, Business Admin, International Relations)

Chinese-Taught Programs	English-Taught Programs
- **Mathematics** - **Humanities Chinese**	- **Mathematics Only**

CRITICAL: These are general guidelines. Always check with your target university's 2026 admissions guide for specific subject requirements for YOUR program. Requirements can differ between universities.

4. What You Need to Study: The Detailed Syllabus
This section breaks down exactly what topics appear on each exam. This is what you need to focus on during your study plan.

- **MATHEMATICS (100 Points)**

Duration: 60 minutes │ 48 multiple choice questions │ Language: English or Chinese

Topics Covered:

Sets & Inequalities	Functions
Geometry & Algebra	**Probability & Statistics**

- **Sets & Inequalities:** Set operations, quadratic and rational inequalities.
- **Functions:** Domain, range, monotonicity, parity; power, exponential, logarithmic, and trigonometric functions; arithmetic and geometric sequences; basics of derivatives and calculus.
- **Geometry & Algebra:** Analytic geometry (lines, circles, ellipses, hyperbolas, parabolas); vectors; complex numbers; solid geometry with space coordinates.
- **Probability & Statistics:** Classical probability; mean and variance; normal distribution.

- **PHYSICS (100 Points)**

Duration: 60 minutes │ 48 multiple choice questions │ Language: English or Chinese

Topics Covered:

Mechanics	Electromagnetism
Thermodynamics	**Optics & Modern Physics**

- **Mechanics:** Velocity, acceleration, Newton's laws, momentum and impulse, work and energy, circular motion, simple harmonic motion
- **Electromagnetism:** Coulomb's law, Ohm's law, magnetic induction, Lorentz force, Faraday's and Lenz's laws
- **Thermodynamics:** Molecular theory, ideal gas equation, first law of thermodynamics
- **Optics:** Reflection and refraction, interference and diffraction
- **Modern Physics:** Photoelectric effect, atomic structure, nuclear physics

- **CHEMISTRY (100 Points)**

Duration: 60 minutes │ 48 multiple choice questions │ Language: English or Chinese

Topics Covered:

Basic Concepts	**Properties & Reactions**
Theory	**Experiments**

- **Basic Concepts:** State changes, chemical equations, solution pH and concentration, ideal gas law
- **Properties & Reactions:** Inorganic substances (acids, bases, salts, metals), organic compounds (hydrocarbons), redox reactions, ion reactions
- **Theory:** Periodic trends, chemical bonds and intermolecular forces, reaction rates and equilibrium, electrochemistry
- **Experiments:** Lab safety, gas identification, purification methods

---

- **CHEMISTRY (100 Points)**

Duration: 60 minutes │ 48 multiple choice questions │ Language: English or Chinese

IMPORTANT: This is NOT HSK. It tests academic language ability, not conversational Chinese.
There are two tracks:

Science Track (理科中文) — For STEM Students

- Math symbols and terminology
- Physics laws and concepts
- Lab operations and procedures
- Data chart interpretation

Humanities Track (文科中文) — For Humanities/Social Sciences Students

- Literature and essays
- Philosophy and ethics
- Law and legal concepts
- History and historical events
- Education and pedagogy
- Politics and government systems

Question Types for Both Tracks:

- Character recognition (認字)
- Vocabulary fill-in-the-blank (詞語填空)
- Sentence and paragraph completion
- Reading comprehension (閱讀理解)

5. Timeline: Your Step-by-Step Action Plan

For a September 2026 enrollment, here's exactly when you should take action:

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2025: Research & Prepare

- Research target universities and identify which have CSC scholarships
- Check each university's 2026 admissions requirements for your program
- Determine which CSCA subjects you need to take
- Start intensive preparation (minimum 3-6 months recommended)
- Gather application documents (transcripts, recommendation letters, etc.)

NOVEMBER 2025: Registration

- Registration opens on csca.cn (typically early November)
- Create account with name exactly as in your passport
- Select your subjects, exam date, and format
- Upload photo and ID details
- Pay exam fees (¥450 for 1 subject, ¥700 for 2+ subjects)
- Registration deadline: November 25, 2025 (for December 21 exam)

DECEMBER 21, 2025: First Global CSCA Exam

- Professional Chinese: 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM Beijing Time
- Mathematics: 3:30 PM – 4:30 PM Beijing Time
- Physics: 5:30 PM – 6:30 PM Beijing Time
- Chemistry: 7:30 PM – 8:30 PM Beijing Time
- (See Section 7 for timezone conversion for your location)
- Late December 2025 - Early January 2026: Score Release
- Scores released within 7 business days (online format) or 14 days (paper format)
- Check your score report on csca.cn
- Evaluate: If satisfied, proceed to applications. If not, consider retaking in January or March 2026

FEBRUARY - APRIL 2026: Submit Applications

- Early submissions improve your chances
- Check university-specific application deadlines
- Submit all required documents: transcripts, recommendations, CSCA score report, personal statement

MARCH - MAY 2026: Interviews & Decisions

- Some universities conduct interviews (usually via Zoom)
- Respond promptly to requests for additional documents
- Receive admission decisions

JUNE - AUGUST 2026: Visa & Preparation

- Receive JW202 form from admitted university
- Apply for X1 student visa at nearest Chinese embassy
- Book flights and arrange accommodation
- Complete pre-departure preparations

Pro Tip: The General Rule is to take the exam 6-8 months before your intended enrollment. This gives you time for score release (1-2 weeks), application processing (1-3 months), possible retakes (1 month between attempts), and visa processing (1-2 months).

2026 Exam Schedule (Full Year)

December 21, 2025	January 25, 2026

March 15, 2026	April 2026

June 2026

6. How to Register for the CSCA

- **Where to Register**

All registration happens on the official CSCA website at https://csca.cn. This is the ONLY official registration portal. Do not register anywhere else.

Step-by-Step Registration Process

- Create your account on csca.cn using your full name exactly as it appears in your passport. Verify your email address and complete your personal profile.
- Fill in your application basics. Select your program language of instruction (English or Chinese) and your intended major. This determines which exam subjects will be available to you.
- Choose your subjects. Remember: Mathematics is mandatory for all applicants. Physics and Chemistry are optional (depends on your major). Professional Chinese (Humanities Chinese or STEM Chinese) is required only for applicants applying to Chinese-taught programs.
- Pick a test window. The inaugural global test is December 21, 2025. From 2026 onwards, there are five sittings each year (January, March, April, June, December). Select a date that gives you enough time for score release before your university's earliest application deadline.
- Select your test format. You can choose home-based online testing (available worldwide) or computer-based testing at official test centers in select countries (Vietnam, Thailand, India, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Kazakhstan).
- Upload your photo and ID details. Follow the portal's format and size specifications carefully. Double-check your passport number, full name, and date of birth for accuracy.
- Pay the fee through the portal. Current fees: ¥450 ($63 USD) for one subject, or ¥700 ($98 USD) for two or more subjects. Keep your payment confirmation.

IMPORTANT: Once your admission ticket is generated, you CANNOT change your subjects or language selection. Verify everything carefully before payment.

7. Technical Requirements (Strictly Enforced)

The CSCA is delivered as a home-based online exam with AI and human proctoring. Your setup must meet these requirements exactly, or you will NOT be allowed to take the test.

Your Primary Device (Computer) Requirements

- Operating System: Windows 10/11 (64-bit) OR Windows 7 SP1
- macOS is NOT SUPPORTED. Do not use a Mac, even with Boot Camp or virtualization software
- Storage: At least 2GB free space (avoid installing exam software on C: drive if possible)
- Screen Resolution: Minimum 1366×768 pixels
- Webcam: Built-in or external USB (720p minimum). Must face you directly and show your face clearly
- Audio: Microphone and speakers are required.Wireless headphones/earbuds are PROHIBITED—use wired only

Your Secondary Device (Phone or Tablet) — MANDATORY

You MUST have a second camera angled at 45 degrees behind you to monitor your side, back, desk, and hands during the entire exam.

- Positioned on tripod or stable stand
- Airplane Mode: ON (critical—prevents surprise phone calls)
- Wi-Fi: ON (enable after turning on Airplane mode)
- Do Not Disturb: ON
- Battery: Fully charged or plugged into charger for entire exam duration

Internet Connection

- Download speed: 10 Mbps minimum (20+ Mbps recommended)
- Upload speed: 5 Mbps minimum
- Latency: Under 100ms preferred
- Stable connection with no frequent disconnections
- Test your connection at the planned exam time (not during peak hours)

Backup Plan: Have a 4G/5G mobile hotspot ready with at least 6GB of data. Test it beforehand to make sure it works. Keep it fully charged and nearby (but outside the exam room until needed).

Drafting Tools for Calculations (CRITICAL UPDATE)

Standard paper is PROHIBITED during the exam. You must use ONE of the following:

- A small whiteboard with an erasable marker, OR
- A blank sheet of paper inside a transparent document sleeve/bag with an erasable marker

Important Rule: You must erase/clear your notes completely in front of the camera at the end of the exam before closing the exam software.

- Private room with closed door
- Well-lit space (natural or artificial light)
- Clear desk—NO books, notes, papers, or unauthorized materials
- No other people in the room
- No beverages or food
- No calculators
- Background free of distracting items

8. What Happens on Exam Day

Pre-Exam (30-60 Minutes Before Start)

- Clear your testing room completely—remove all unauthorized materials
- Log in to the exam platform 30-60 minutes early
- Complete facial recognition verification
- Hold your original passport to the camera for verification
- Perform a 360° pan of your room with your webcam so proctors can see the entire space

During the Exam

- You cannot leave your seat without approval (emergencies only)
- Keep your eyes on the screen. Frequent looking away triggers AI flags
- Use your whiteboard/transparent sleeve only for drafting
- If tech issues occur (internet drops), log back in immediately. Answers auto-save
- Contact proctor via exam software if problems persist

Post-Exam

- Wait for the "Exam submitted successfully" message
- Show your whiteboard/sleeve to the camera and erase ALL your notes before exiting
- Close the exam application

9. Scoring, Validity & What Happens Next

When Do You Get Your Scores?

- Scores are released within 7 business days for online exams, or 14 business days for paper-based exams. You'll receive notification via email, and your score report will be available on your csca.cn dashboard.

Score Validity

- Your CSCA scores are valid for 2 years from the date you take the exam. However, universities typically prefer scores from the current intake cycle (i.e., if you're applying for 2026 intake, scores from 2025 or 2026 are preferred over older scores).

Can You Retake the Exam?

- Yes. You can retake the CSCA unlimited times. There are 5 exam sessions per year (Jan, Mar, Apr, Jun, Dec), so you have plenty of opportunities. Simply register for the next available session and pay the fee again (¥450 for 1 subject, ¥700 for 2+).

Strategy: Plan retakes carefully. A June retake might be too late for universities with March application deadlines. Most students realistically have 1-2 chances to get a score suitable for their target September intake.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Is CSCA mandatory for all international students?**

A: Not yet, but it's rapidly becoming mandatory. For 2026 intake, CSCA is required for all Chinese Government Scholarship (CSC) universities. By 2028, it's expected to be mandatory for ALL international undergraduate applicants. Some private universities may have different requirements—always check your target university's 2026 admissions guide.

- **Can I use a Mac?**

A: No. macOS is not supported. Even if you try to install Windows via Boot Camp or virtualization, the proctoring software detects this as a security threat and will block you from taking the exam. If you don't have a Windows computer, borrow one from a friend or family member.

- **What if I don't know which subjects to take?**

A: Check your university's 2026 admissions guide for your specific program. If you're still unsure, contact the university's international admissions office directly. Don't guess—registering for the wrong subjects is a waste of money and time.

- **What if I score poorly on the first attempt?**

A: You can retake the exam as many times as you want. There's no limit on attempts. However, be strategic about timing—make sure you have enough time for scores to be released and applications to be processed before university deadlines. Also, you can apply to Chinese universities that don't require CSCA for 2026, and your scores are valid for 2 years.

- **Can I change my subjects after registering?**

A: No. Once your admission ticket is generated, you cannot change subjects or language. If you need different subjects, you must register for a different exam session. This is why it's critical to verify everything carefully before paying.

- **What's the difference between home-based online and computer-based testing?**

A: Online (Home-Based): Take the exam from your home with remote proctoring. Available worldwide. Scores released in 7 days. You need to meet all the technical requirements. Computer-Based Testing (CBT): Take the exam at an official test center. Available in Vietnam, Thailand, India, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Kazakhstan. More reliable (no internet issues). Technical support on-site. Scores also released in 7 days.
Choose CBT if: You don't trust your home internet, live in an area with unreliable connectivity, or prefer supervised testing.

- **What if my internet drops during the exam?**

A: The exam software automatically saves your answers. If your internet drops, log back in immediately using the same browser/account. Your progress will be restored. This is why having a 4G mobile hotspot backup is critical. If the problem persists, contact the proctor via the exam software.

- **Which universities require CSCA?**

A: All Chinese Government Scholarship (CSC) universities require CSCA for 2026 intake. As of November 2025, universities NOT requiring CSCA for 2026 include: Tsinghua University, Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University (BNBU), University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC), Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU), Sino-British College USST, and CUHK-Shenzhen.
Note: This landscape is changing. Always check your target university's official 2026 admissions page.

11. Final Tips & Resources

Your Pre-Exam Preparation Checklist

Two weeks before your exam:

- Install the CSCA exam software
- Run the official system compatibility check
- Test your webcam quality on a video call
- Test your microphone and speakers
- Run internet speed tests (speedtest.net)
- Identify any compatibility issues early

One week before:

- Complete the CSCA mock exam
- Practice the room scan and secondary device setup
- Do a full dry run of the exam process
- Clear and prepare your testing space
- Run final system checks
- Verify firewall and antivirus whitelisting

Three days before:

- Final system check
- Verify exam software is updated to latest version
- Confirm your exam date, time, and subjects
- Get adequate sleep and rest

Study Materials & Official Resources

- Official CSCA Examination Syllabus: https://csca.cn
- CSCA Mock Exams: https://csca.cn
- SJTU Sample Questions (Math & Physics): https://csca.cn
- Register for CSCA: https://csca.cn

Key Takeaways

- The CSCA is your gateway to Chinese universities. Treat it seriously.
- Know your subjects. Double-check your university's requirements before registering.
- Prepare for 3-6 months minimum. The exam tests deep understanding, not memorization.
- Get your technical setup right. This is non-negotiable. Test everything in advance.
- Take the exam early. December 2025 or January 2026 gives you the most flexibility.
- You can retake. One poor performance isn't fatal. Plan your retakes strategically.
- Stay organized. Keep track of deadlines, requirements, and university-specific needs.

Soft Consultants

Good Luck

For Your CSCA & Your Journey To
STUDY IN CHINA!

Want To Start Your **Journey in China**

CLICK HERE

For More Info About:

CSCA Guide & Program ——→ **CLICK HERE**

MBBS in China Program ——→ **CLICK HERE**

BDS CSCA Exam Info ——→ **CLICK HERE**

For more information, visit   www.csca.cn

Disclaimer

This is an unofficial guide based on information available as of November 2025. Always verify dates, requirements, and procedures with the official CSCA website before registering or making any commitments.