

AI gets so-so grade in Chinese university entrance exam

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An AI machine has taken the maths section of China's annual university entrance exam, finishing it faster than students but with a below average grade.

The [artificial intelligence](#) machine—a tall black box containing 11 servers placed in the centre of a [test](#) room—took two versions of the exam on Wednesday in Chengdu, Sichuan province.

The machine, called AI-MATHS, scored 105 out of 150 in 22 minutes. Students have two hours to complete the test, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

It then spent 10 minutes on another version and scored 100.

Beijing liberal art students who took the maths exam last year scored an average of 109.

Exam questions and the AI machine's answers were both shown on a big screen while three people kept score.

The AI was developed in 2014 by a Chengdu-based company, Zhunxingyunxue Technology, using big data, artificial intelligence and natural language recognition technologies from Tsinghua University.

"I hope next year the machine can improve its performance on logical reasoning and computer algorithms and score over 130," Lin Hui, the company's CEO, was quoted as saying by Xinhua.

"This is not a make-or-break test for a robot. The aim is to train artificial intelligence to learn the way humans reason and deal with numbers," Lin said.

The machine took only one of the four subjects in the crucially important entrance examination, the other three being Chinese, a foreign language and one comprehensive test in either liberal arts or science.

While AI is faster with numbers than humans, it struggles with language.

"For example, the robot had a hard time understanding the words 'students' and 'teachers' on the test and failed to understand the question, so it scored zero for that question," Lin said.

The test was the latest attempt to show how AI technology can perform in comparison to the human brain.

Last year, the Google-owned computer algorithm AlphaGo became the first computer programme to beat an elite player in a full match of the ancient Chinese game of Go.

AlphaGo won again last month, crushing the world's top player, Ke Jie of China, in a three-game sweep.

AlphaGo's feats have fuelled visions of AI that can not only perform pre-programmed tasks, but help humanity look at complex scientific, technical and medical mysteries in new ways.

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