# Course report 2022

| Subject | Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional) and Cantonese |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level | Advanced Higher |

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any appeals.

# Grade boundary and statistical information

## Statistical information: update on courses

| Number of resulted entries in 2022 | 75 |
|---|---|

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

| A | Percentage | 0.0 | Cumulative percentage | [c] | Number of candidates | 60 | Minimum mark required | 136 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B | Percentage | [c] | Cumulative percentage | [c] | Number of candidates | 5 | Minimum mark required | 116 |
| C | Percentage | [c] | Cumulative percentage | [c] | Number of candidates | 10 | Minimum mark required | 96 |
| D | Percentage | [c] | Cumulative percentage | [c] | Number of candidates | 0 | Minimum mark required | 76 |
| No award | Percentage | [c] | Cumulative percentage | N/A | Number of candidates | [c] | Minimum mark required | N/A |

All figures are rounded to the nearest five. Figures between one and four inclusive have been suppressed to protect against the risk of disclosure of personal information. All percentage figures for a course have been suppressed where values between one and four inclusive have been suppressed. Cells containing suppressed figures are marked up with the shorthand [c].

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

In this report:

♦ 'most' means greater than 70%
♦ 'many' means 50% to 69%
♦ 'some' means 25% to 49%
♦ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics page of SQA's website.

# Section 1: comments on the assessment

The question papers performed as expected. It is pleasing to see a steady, increasing number of entries given the considerable level of disruption to learning and teaching over the last two years.

The examination was of an appropriate level of difficulty and feedback from the marking team, teachers and lecturers indicated it was positively received by centres and was fair and accessible for candidates. The questions in both reading and listening were able to stretch some more able candidates but also accessible to less able candidates. The grade boundary was adjusted to account for the impact of disruption to skills development caused by the pandemic.

## Question paper 1: Reading and Translation

The question paper largely performed as expected, enabling candidates to access the wide range of marks available. Question 6: the overall purpose question, and question 7: the translation question were more demanding questions that differentiated candidates. However, question 1(a) and question 4(a) had less distinguishing answers and most candidates answered correctly.

## Question paper 2: Listening and Discursive Writing

Most candidates answered question 1(b) and question 2(a)(i) correctly, while some found questions such as question 1(c) and question 2 (a) (ii) more challenging.

In discursive writing, the overall standard was high. There were very good essays that demonstrated fair, appropriate rendition of subjunctive clauses, and accurate use of discursive language. The most popular choice was question 6 on culture.

## Portfolio

The portfolio is always a challenging part of the assessment for candidates. However, this year the overall performance improved, with some outstanding pieces with a variety of literature work. Language in work was not chosen by any candidates. However, there are increasing numbers of candidates choosing poetry literacy.

## Performance–talking

Visiting assessors reported that many candidates were well-prepared and gave confident performances. Candidates often performed strongly where an informative STL form had been received by the visiting assessor before the assessment.

Some markers, teachers and lecturers provided feedback that the reduction in time for the performance–talking had little overall effect; however, it did have an overall effect on the interactive conversation techniques.

# Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Many candidates produced high-quality answers in all aspects of the assessment that indicated familiarity with marking guidance and focused on topics that invited discussion and debate. There were some outstanding performances. However, the gap between able and less able candidates was greater than previous years. Some achieved close to full marks, while others struggled with providing the relevant information.

There has been a clear improvement in the portfolio this year.

## Question paper 1: Reading and Translation

Candidates generally responded well to the reading comprehension questions. Most candidates demonstrated a high level of understanding to the article. There were several outstanding responses, in particular for the overall purpose question. However, there are still a few areas that could have been improved. Some candidates provided a very long answer but failed to identify some key details. Some candidates didn't provide accurate details and did not gain the available mark, for example:

♦ question 3(b): one of the answers was 'she spent more than 20 thousand yuan *in one month*'. Some candidates did not provide 'in one month' and did not gain the mark, despite answering the rest correctly
♦ question 5: the answer is 'whether to let their children be responsible for their own choices/decisions.' A number of candidates did not gain the mark because they missed out 'their own choices/decisions'

The overall purpose question is one of the most challenging parts in the question paper. For candidates to gain 3 or more marks they must summarise the overall purpose of the text. Many candidates had difficulty doing this. Some candidates wrote unnecessarily long answers in which they repeated most of the information they had been given in the comprehension questions, rather than addressing the actual question and highlighting the key aspects of the text, as well as any stylistic techniques used by the writer. Some included quotes from the text in their answer but just repeated these in English instead of using them to develop their argument.

The translation is a challenging part of this question paper. Many candidates translated the text word by word, providing an interpretation or literal translation of the text. It often lacked the accuracy and details required for a fully accurate translation. Grammar mistakes still appeared repeatedly in candidates' responses, for example:

♦ sense unit 1: 在过去二十年里，很多学生享受了自由带来的好处 'Over the last 20 years, many students have enjoyed the benefits brought by freedom.' Many candidates used present tense or past tense or missing 'the' in their answer. The lack of consistency of the tenses was often the cause of marks being missed. Many candidates did not gain marks through a basic lack of accuracy in conjunction words and misusing tenses

## Question paper 2: Listening and Discursive Writing

Many candidates performed well in this question paper. Both items 1 and 2 in listening allowed candidates to perform well. The topic was about social media which most candidates were familiar with.

The context in the listening question paper was employability. It is an accessible topic that candidates seemed familiar with. However, it proved challenging when candidates tried to predict answers or relied on guess work. Some candidates were unable to retain sufficient details required to answer the questions accurately and often misunderstood part of the information, for example question 2(a)(ii) 'foreign qualification' is not 'foreign university', 2(a)(iv) 'a better position' is not 'a better opportunity'.

Performance in discursive writing continues to be very good, with many outstanding performances. Candidates generally achieved very good results when they incorporated appropriate learned material into their answer or when their essays were relevant to the question.

All topics in the discursive writing question paper were attempted, with the most popular being question 6 (culture). There were still some candidates who did not address the aspect set in the essay title and the content was very thin, which meant they could not gain higher marks. Some writing pieces lacked structure or focus, despite using some good language, and the top band marks could not be achieved. The accuracy and language resource of the writing task could have been improved. The wrong word-order and misusing the dictionary caused issues for some candidates.

## Portfolio

Candidate performance in the portfolio continued to improve this year with some very good work. A poetry-based portfolio was a popular choice this year, in which some submissions produced strong performances. Again, candidates performed well when they had an opportunity to demonstrate an analytical approach through the choice of an appropriate question. A good number of candidates used appropriate titles to outline the focus of their study. They were also able to present convincing evidence from sources to support the conclusions made. Many candidates used appropriate critical terminology and/or specialist vocabulary to analyse and demonstrate the understanding of their chosen area of study. The candidates were able to use evidence from the source texts to justify their analysis and finding. This is important as it allows the candidates to convey a clear and coherent message.

It is encouraging to see both new and a variety of literatures being used.

There were a few areas that candidates found demanding:

♦ selecting a title was problematic for many candidates. The title should be in line with the focus of the work
♦ candidates appeared to find it difficult to select a title or essay question that generated debate or critical analysis
♦ many candidates had poorly worded titles, or titles that were too vague

- the weaker performances were those where candidates were descriptive, rather than critical and analytical in their discussion. This was often the result of a poor choice of essay title
- there was often too much of a 'story-telling' approach and insufficient critical analysis or evaluation
- some offered little analysis or critical reflection in the portfolio
- some wrote the majority of the article by retelling the story rather than giving critical reflection
- some did not proofread their work effectively in English

## Performance–talking

Most candidates' performance was very good, despite the disruption to learning and teaching. There was a reduction in the length of the performance–talking this year. This required more interactive discussion techniques, which were challenging for some candidates.

There was more variety in the range of marks this year. It is evident that most candidates were well-prepared with the topics they learned. They were enterprising in their attempts to go beyond minimal responses and incorporated some useful and interesting discussion techniques into their conversation with the visiting assessors. Some candidates appeared to find this section challenging due to a lack of practice. Some were unable to answer unfamiliar but accessible questions however, overall, the performance of the candidates was strong.

Despite this being an area where candidates generally do very well, some still had difficulty manipulating and adapting learned material to cope with questions they were asked. Some candidates were over-prepared for 'conversation' and sometimes were less spontaneous in their response.

# Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ read the marking instructions for the 2022 question paper, to demonstrate to them the correct amount of detail required for a mark at Advanced Higher level
♦ read the general principles and detailed marking instructions for discursive writing
♦ make sure their handwriting is clearly legible, as this can affect their mark
♦ have opportunities to practise exam technique throughout the course

It would be beneficial for teachers and lecturers of the Chinese languages to work with Modern Languages departments to share best practice with other colleagues.

## Question paper 1: Reading and Translation

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ answer the comprehension questions with as much relevant and accurate detail as possible. A long answer that lacks accurate details doesn't gain marks. They should have a comprehensive understanding of the text and show attention to detail
♦ develop their dictionary skills and pay attention to the grammar
♦ show a good understanding of Chinese, as well as reasonable and accurate expression of English, to receive good marks in translation
♦ give more attention to the development of word-order skills, especially when tackling the passage for translation
♦ answer to the overall purpose question is well-structured and has a rounded conclusion
♦ are aware any quotation from the text should be appropriate and relevant, not just a repetition of what has been argued in English. It is essential for candidates to provide a summary of the text to gain a minimum of 3 marks

## Question paper 2: Listening and Discursive Writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ provide full and detailed answers as much as possible
♦ avoid prejudging the content and guessing the answers
♦ pay attention to the structure of the essay and the word order
♦ construct a relevant and personal response, in which they may use learned material relevant to the essay title

## Portfolio

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ♦ refer to SQA guidelines when preparing bibliographies, to ensure suitability, quality and breadth
- ♦ know that bibliographies containing three or more references to sources is good practice
- ♦ are aware that Wikipedia (without mention of a website), and a reference to a Chinese article (on its own without any author and publisher) does not constitute appropriate items for a bibliography
- ♦ decide on a title that is in line with the focus of their work and generates debate or critical analysis
- ♦ make the title as specific as possible and research the area as deeply as possible
- ♦ know that portfolio pieces benefit from quotations in Chinese to support the arguments being developed. Translating these quotes into English should be avoided
- ♦ develop an appropriate, formal, and accurate use of English
- ♦ carefully proofread their submissions
- ♦ practise accuracy in their quotations from literary texts
- ♦ are aware that the quality of English in the portfolio is very important
- ♦ practise how to structure an essay

## Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should continue to support candidates in discussion techniques to help them to deal with any question that goes beyond their 'comfort zone' of learned material. More practice with native speakers could help with the interactive discussion and 'spontaneous' response.

# Appendix 1: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

♦ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
♦ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
♦ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the National Qualifications 2022 Awarding — Methodology Report.