



Course Report 2016

Subject	Chinese Languages
Level	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It 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.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Summary of the Course assessment

2016 was the first year of presentations in the new Advanced Higher Courses in Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional) and Cantonese. Entries this year were slightly higher than for the equivalent Courses in 2015, with a few non-native speakers being presented.

The examination was of an appropriate level of difficulty and in line with the Course Arrangements. Evidently, candidates had been well prepared by centres for each component. The overall level of performance was very strong, with some excellent performances.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Many candidates performed well in all aspects of the examination, and there were some outstanding performances. Most candidates were clearly well prepared for the examination, and familiar with the format. The questions in both Reading and Listening provided for a full range of candidate responses. In particular, candidates performed very well in the Listening papers, and it is worth mentioning that there was a significant improvement in the Translation section of the Reading and Translation paper.

Performance in Discursive Writing continues to be good, with many outstanding performances.

For component 4: Performance: talking, centres are to be commended, as the performance of candidates in this component was highly pleasing. Most candidates scored very highly, and the majority were enthusiastic and well prepared. Many candidates made good use of learned material and were enterprising in their attempts to go beyond minimal responses; and also incorporated some useful and interesting discussion techniques into their conversation with the Visiting Assessor.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Translation

Candidates generally responded well to Reading comprehension questions, although there are a few points to address.

Overall purpose question: Although the overall purpose question is the most challenging part of the paper, there are increasing numbers of good performances. However:

- ◆ Some candidates simply retold the Reading text and failed to develop their own argument.
- ◆ A few candidates wrote unnecessarily long answers in which they repeated most of the information they had given in answer to the comprehension questions, rather than

addressing the question and highlighting the key aspects of the text and any stylistic techniques used by the writer.

- ◆ Many candidates mostly provided information from the text rather than attempting to draw inferences.
- ◆ Some included quotes from the text in their answer, but just repeated these in English instead of using them to develop their argument.

Comprehension questions: Some candidates lost marks through a lack of attention to detail, such as the omission of 'more and more' and 'more than'.

Some answers were not specific enough, such as '餐厅家具'. Some candidates only wrote 'furniture' rather than 'dining furniture'

Translation: This aspect remains challenging, but performance improved significantly this year. Grammar mistakes still appeared in candidates' responses, and answers often lacked the accuracy and details required for a fully accurate translation. Many candidates lost marks through a basic lack of accuracy in translating articles and tenses.

Component 2: question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

On the whole candidate performance in the Listening paper this year was very good. A few points to address:

- ◆ Some candidates were unable to retain sufficient details required to answer the questions accurately, often demonstrating an understanding of only part of the information, eg where questions require three points, but candidates only were able to give two points or fewer.
- ◆ Some candidates misunderstood some key words, such as in question 1(c), where some candidates answered 'They have the opportunity to **holiday**' rather than 'They have the opportunity to **travel**'; and question 2(c), where some candidates answered '**Do not want to** stay in China for a long period of time' rather than 'Not willing to ...'
- ◆ In the Discursive Writing, all four essay topics were attempted, with the most popular being employability (做一份不喜欢的工作比没有工作好). There are still some candidates who did not address the aspect set in the essay title, and the content was very thin, preventing them from accessing higher marks.

Component 3: Portfolio

Of the examination components, performance in the portfolio was the weakest; though it did show improvement (assisted by the preparation undertaken in the Specialist Study Unit). A few points to address:

- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Often, there was too much of a 'story-telling' approach and insufficient critical analysis or evaluation. Some offered little analysis or critical reflection in the Portfolio. Some candidates spent the majority of their essay retelling the story, and not on critical reflection.
- ◆ Some candidates chose Language in Work reports, but here sometimes the content ended up as a work report or diary without analysis, which resulted in a very low mark.

- ◆ Some candidates had very limited references and bibliographies, with others penalised for failure to include a bibliography.

Section 3: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

- ◆ It is important to encourage candidates to make full use of the SQA Modern Languages website, especially by referring to External Assessment Reports and Course Reports for Advanced Higher Chinese from the previous years; as well as the Marking Instructions.
- ◆ Share all general assessment Information, pegged mark descriptors/performance descriptors etc, and SQA documentation with candidates.
- ◆ Candidates should be reminded that handwriting needs to be clearly legible to ensure the marks awarded equate to content.
- ◆ Centres should encourage Chinese teachers/practitioners to work with Modern Languages departments to share best practice with other colleagues.

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Translation

- ◆ In preparing candidates for the Reading, centres should encourage them to read the text globally to gain an overall understanding, so that they will be able to answer the questions accurately. Answers to the comprehension questions should contain as much relevant detail as possible.
- ◆ In order to receive the best marks in Translation, candidates are required to demonstrate both a good understanding of Chinese and reasonable expression of English. More attention should be given to the development of translation skills and, in particular, care should be taken with recognising and accurately translating tenses.
- ◆ For the overall purpose question, centres should encourage candidates to draw inferences from the text and not just provide factual information or repeat the answers to their comprehension questions.

Component 2 - question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to provide full and detailed answers as far as possible. They should try to avoid prejudging the content.
- ◆ Teachers could advise candidates on how they should use the time they have when looking at questions before they hear the recording.
- ◆ Centres should encourage candidates to read the essay title carefully and to construct a relevant and personal response in which they may draw upon learned material — but this must be relevant to the essay title.

Component 3 - Portfolio

- ◆ Candidates should read the Portfolio guidelines carefully. The selection of essays could be wider, and a title or essay question which generates debate or critical analysis is crucial.
- ◆ Centres should encourage candidates to choose more varied topics. Try to make the title as specific as possible, and to research the area as deeply as possible
- ◆ Share with candidates the assessment criteria for Portfolio writing so that they know what is expected in terms of content, analytical approach and structure.
- ◆ It would be advisable to negotiate choice of essay titles with candidates, to ensure more individual responses; particularly if they are studying the same text or topic.
- ◆ Support candidates with developing an appropriately formal and accurate use of English.

Component 4: Performance: Talking

Continue to train candidates in discussion techniques in the language to enable them to deal with any question that goes beyond their 'comfort zone' of learned material.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	0
Number of resulted entries in 2016	32

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	93.8%	93.8%	30	140
B	6.3%	100.0%	2	120
C	0.0%	100.0%	0	100
D	0.0%	100.0%	0	90
No award	0.0%	-	0	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.