



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional) & Cantonese
Level(s)	Higher

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. 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 question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

2012 was the third year of presentation at Higher level in Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional) and Cantonese. Entries increased significantly this year with a total of 74 candidates. On the whole, candidates' performance was good.

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.

In Writing, candidates performed very well in both Writing pieces and there were some outstanding short essays, in which learned language was successfully adapted to suit the context. In Directed Writing, many candidates fully engaged with the topic.

In Reading, an interesting topic was chosen, and some candidates wrote extensive responses. There were several good examples of translation.

The Listening was handled very well and with confidence, and this is reflected in the improved marks achieved.

Areas which candidates found demanding

This year, the Reading passage was seen as one of the most challenging parts. The complexity of the language presented challenge to many candidates. Some demanding questions, such as Question 1 (a) and Question 2 (a), were misunderstood by some candidates.

Responses sometimes lacked sufficient detail to gain the full mark, such as Question 1 (b): in order to get full marks, candidates had to mention both (reflective) **jacket** and **helmet** — only one of the responses was not sufficient to gain the full mark.

It was disappointing, however, that some candidates failed to demonstrate their comprehension of the 'easier' points by failing to recognise the details of the sentence, such as in Question 2 (b): missing the details '更'----'更轻巧,更舒适' lighter and **more** comfortable.

In Directed Writing, a number of candidates failed to address all bullet points as required, for which they were penalised.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading and Translation

- ◆ Centres should continue with established good practice in preparing candidates for reading questions.
- ◆ Continue to highlight to candidates the difference between reading for comprehension and providing accurate translation.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to read the passage globally rather than sentence by sentence, in order to gain full understanding of the whole passage.
- ◆ Encourage candidates, in the Translation section, to pay particular attention to the articles and tenses used.

Directed Writing

- ◆ Centres should continue with established good practice in preparing candidates for this activity.
- ◆ Writing a long passage but missing the bullet points will entail a penalty. Centres should advise candidates to read each bullet point carefully, to ensure that they do not miss any bullet point, and also to ensure that learned material is both relevant and appropriate to the bullet point.
- ◆ It is important to advise candidates to use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written, and **not** to create and invent new sentences.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	38
------------------------------------	----

Number of resulted entries in 2012	74
------------------------------------	----

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 100				
A	87.8%	87.8%	65	68
B	5.4%	93.2%	4	58
C	2.7%	95.9%	2	48
D	1.4%	97.3%	1	43
No award	2.7%	100.0%	2	-

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.