



## External Assessment Report 2012

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Subject(s) | Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional) & Cantonese |
| Level(s)   | Advanced 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 Advanced Higher level in Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional) and Cantonese. There were fewer entries this year than in 2011.

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

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Many candidates performed well in all aspects of the examination. There were some outstanding performances. Most candidates were clearly well prepared for the examination, and familiar with the format.

Performance in Listening and Discursive Writing was very encouraging, with many excellent performances. Overall performance improved on 2011. In Discursive Writing, candidates generally achieved good results when they incorporated appropriate learned material into their answer, and when their essays were fully relevant to the topics.

In the Speaking test, centres are to be commended, as the performance of candidates in this component was highly pleasing.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Paper I Reading and Translation

Again this year, the inferential question was the most challenging part of Paper I. Some candidates just retold the reading passage and neither developed their own arguments nor provided sufficient analysis. Many candidates mostly provided information from the text rather than attempting to draw inferences. Some included quotes from the text in their answer but simply retold these in English instead of using them to develop their argument.

Translation is another challenging part in this paper. Grammatical mistakes often appeared in candidates' responses.

### Folio

The Folio was one of the parts of the examination that was least well done. Often, there was too much of a 'story-telling' approach and insufficient critical analysis or evaluation. Some candidates offered little analysis or critical reflection in the Folio. Some pieces merely provided a retelling/summary of the text(s) studied.

# **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

## **General**

Encourage candidates to make full use of the SQA Modern Languages website, especially by referring to External Assessment Reports for AH Chinese from previous years as well as the Marking Instructions.

Centres should encourage Chinese teachers/practitioners to work with other colleagues in the Modern Languages department to learn from best practice.

## **Reading and Translation**

In preparing candidates for the Reading, centres should encourage candidates to read the passage globally so that candidates will be able to answer the questions accurately. Answers to the comprehension questions should contain as much relevant detail as possible.

In tackling the inferential question, centres should encourage candidates to draw inferences from the passage — not just to provide factual information or repeat their answers to the comprehension questions when doing this task.

More attention should be given to the development of translation skills. In particular, care should be taken with recognising and accurately translating tenses.

## **Listening and Discursive Writing**

Candidates should be encouraged to provide full and detailed answers as far as possible. Candidates should try to avoid prejudging the content.

## **Folio**

Read the Folio Guidelines carefully. The selection of texts could be wider and a title or essay question that generates debate or critical analysis is crucial.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Number of resulted entries in 2011 | 15 |
|------------------------------------|----|

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Number of resulted entries in 2012 | 7 |
|------------------------------------|---|

## Statistical information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

| Distribution of Course awards | %      | Cum. % | Number of candidates | Lowest mark |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|----------------------|-------------|
| Maximum Mark 200              |        |        |                      |             |
| A                             | 100.0% | 100.0% | 7                    | 140         |
| B                             | 0.0%   | 100.0% | 0                    | 120         |
| C                             | 0.0%   | 100.0% | 0                    | 100         |
| D                             | 0.0%   | 100.0% | 0                    | 90          |
| No award                      | 0.0%   | 100.0% | 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.