



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject	Cantonese/Mandarin (Simplified & Traditional)
Level	Intermediate 2

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 fourth year of presentation of candidates at this level. This set of question papers contained a range of well selected texts, and related clearly to the teaching syllabus for Intermediate 2.

Although the candidate population is changing, the difficulty of the examination was on standard, and the content was clearly related to the Modern Languages Arrangements. Candidates had been again well prepared by centres for each component.

Centres are to be commended, as the performance of candidates on the whole was highly pleasing.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The great majority of candidates seemed well prepared for the examination and had been presented at the level appropriate to their ability.

Reading

In general, candidates performed very well in the Reading component. They seemed to identify with the variety of Topics and Themes presented in the texts. There was good progression in the level demanded through the shorter texts to the longer Reading text. Reading texts 1, 2 & 3 were handled very well with most candidates scoring highly in these shorter texts. This year, there has been significant improvement in candidates' handling of text 4. Most candidates gave it a good go with fair degree of success.

Listening

Listening is often perceived as the most challenging component of the examination. Once again, candidates are to be congratulated for their impressive performance in this paper overall. It was handled well and with confidence. The opportunity to hear each item three times may well have had a positive impact on candidate performance.

Writing

In the Writing tasks, there were many well-prepared and excellent responses. Many candidates displayed strong ability, employing a good range of vocabulary and expressions, and addressing all the compulsory bullet points convincingly. On the whole, performance was very good.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading

Most candidates handled all four Reading texts well. However, some candidates lost marks due to lack of precision. It is important that candidates ensure they provide adequate detail in all responses.

There were a number of candidates who identified the single character '游' from Vocabulary '旅游' and gave the answer 'to swim' rather than 'to travel'.

Listening

Overall, Examiners noted pleasing performances from this cohort. However, candidates are reminded to listen carefully and not to prejudge the content.

Writing

There were some outstanding performances in writing this year. However, a few candidates relied on pre-learned material rather than responding to the particular task. To our disappointment, there were Writing papers that had not been attempted.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading

Centres are encouraged to provide candidates with more opportunities to familiarise themselves with the handling of longer texts, and candidates should also be advised that detailed answers should be provided when handling text 4 in particular. In addition, centres are urged to work with candidates to increase their level of accuracy in terms of character recognition. The confusion that arose between 'to swim' and 'to travel' is a case in point.

Listening

Candidates are advised to listen closely and avoid assuming they understand the content up front, using the time allocated to familiarise themselves with the questions. The opportunity to hear each item for a third playing should afford candidates the opportunity to look over and check the answers they have written.

Writing

Candidates should be reminded by centres that each bullet point should be responded to. It would be better to provide only a thin answer than to leave the entire paper blank. Once again, it is very important that candidates and centres have a clear understanding of SQA Pegged Mark Descriptors and how these criteria are applied.

General

Centres are strongly encouraged to make full use of current resources available such as Hanban and SQA's support materials, as well as resources from SQA's Support Events. The

availability of marking instructions is also useful, and can assist with future preparation of candidates.

The following advice should help candidates cope with the demands of the external assessment:

- ◆ Ensure that responses in Writing are constructed in a way that displays a good range of vocabulary and is in line with demands of the Course.
- ◆ Make sure candidates have the necessary dictionary skills, so that they can make effective use of this resource under exam conditions.
- ◆ Remind candidates to maintain a balance between content and accuracy in the Writing paper. Most importantly, candidates should not leave sections unattempted.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2011	38
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	34
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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	79.4%	79.4%	27	69
B	8.8%	88.2%	3	59
C	0.0%	88.2%	0	49
D	0.0%	88.2%	0	44
No award	11.8%	100.0%	4	-

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.