



## External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	<b>Cantonese/Mandarin</b>
Level	<b>Intermediate 1</b>

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

This set of question papers contained a range of well-selected texts, with which candidates engaged very well, on the whole. 2011 was the third year of presentation of candidates at this level.

The content of the examination was of an appropriate level. The content related clearly to the Prescribed Themes and Topics, and, in terms of difficulty, was in line with Modern Languages Arrangements. Overall performance was very good.

Centres are to be commended, as the performance of candidates in all components was highly pleasing on the whole, and there were some excellent performances. There were a very small number of disappointing performances in the Writing component.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

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

### Reading

Overall, 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 of demand through the shorter to the longer Reading text. It is pleasing to note that texts 1, 2 & 3 were handled very well and that most candidates scored highly in the shorter texts.

### Listening

Listening is often perceived as the most challenging component. Once again, candidates are to be congratulated for their impressive performance in this paper. It was handled well and with confidence. This is reflected in the much improved marks achieved.

### Writing

In the Writing tasks, there were many well-prepared and excellent responses. Many candidates wrote with flair with a good range of vocabulary and expressions.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Reading

Most candidates handled Reading texts 1, 2 & 3 very well. However, the handling of text 4 was less satisfactory. Centres should provide candidates with more opportunities to work with longer texts to familiarise them with the demands of this task.

In addition, candidates are strongly urged to pay closer attention to the wording of each question and ensure that they respond appropriately and accordingly. Some candidates lost marks by misreading questions.

### **Listening**

Examiners noted pleasing performances from this cohort. Most questions were tackled well by the majority of candidates.

### **Writing**

Performances in this component were polarised. There were some outstanding responses, where all four sections were address fully and in a balanced way. On the other hand, there were a small number of extremely disappointing responses where candidates simply did not respond to the demand of the task. One or two candidates wrote very little.

Centres should impress upon candidates the need to make a response in each of the sections. Sometimes candidates spent too much time completing the opening section and failed to write anything in the remaining sections.

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

### **Reading**

Centres should maintain good practice in preparing candidates for Texts 1, 2 & 3. In future, centres are encouraged to provide candidates with more opportunities to familiarise themselves with the handling of longer text and strategies for handling short answer questions. In addition, centres are urged to work with candidates to increase their level of accuracy in terms of character recognition, for example Text 3 雨 *yu* (rain) & 雪 *xue* (snow); 便宜 *pian yi* & 方便 *fang bian*.

### **Listening**

Candidates are advised to listen closely and avoid prejudging the content, familiarising themselves with the questions.

### **Writing**

It is very important that candidates have a clear understanding of SQA pegged mark descriptors and how these criteria are applied. Centres must reinforce the need for candidates to attempt **all** sections rather than focusing on perfecting one or two sections.

Candidates should be aware of the pitfalls of overusing 'to be' and literal translation from English to Chinese. In addition, candidates should consider varying verbs to add variety to their sentence structures.

### **General**

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

- ◆ Candidates should not be put off by the length of the text, ie longer text does not necessarily equate with increased level of difficulty.
- ◆ Centres should ensure that written responses are constructed in a way that display a good range of vocabulary, and are in line with the demands of the Course. Centres should refer to the *Modern Languages Productive Grammar Grid*, which has been specifically adapted for Chinese. This is available in Appendix A of the Modern Languages Arrangements Document.
- ◆ Candidates should develop the necessary dictionary skills, so that they can make effective use of this resource under exam conditions.

# Statistical information: update on Courses

## Cantonese Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2010	0
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	2
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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	-	-	-	70
B	-	-	-	60
C	-	-	-	50
D	-	-	-	45
No award	-	-	-	-

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Mandarin (Simplified) Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2010	30
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	27
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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	74.1%	74.1%	20	70
B	14.8%	88.9%	4	60
C	3.7%	92.6%	1	50
D	7.4%	100.0%	2	45
No award	0.0%	100.0%	0	-

### Mandarin (Traditional) Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2010	1
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	1
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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	-	-	-	70
B	-	-	-	60
C	-	-	-	50
D	-	-	-	45
No award	-	-	-	-

## **General commentary on grade boundaries**

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that 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, though, very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Each year, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.